

Highland Avenue Corridor Study

Salem MA

Final Report
March 31, 2021

SASAKI



CITY OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

Kimberley Driscoll
Mayor

Office of the Mayor

Like many Salem residents, I can remember when Caldor, Rich's, Kelly Nissan, Vincent's Potato Chips, Hillcrest Chevrolet, Purity Supreme and the Moose Club were located on Route 107. Over the years all of those parcels have been repurposed into other uses and Route 107, Highland Avenue, continues to be an active commercial corridor for our City. There is growing interest from private builders and commercial enterprises in several privately owned parcels along and nearby Highland Avenue. With all this in mind, the launched the Highland Avenue Corridor Study to more comprehensively outline a strategic approach that can serve as a guideline for fostering and managing future growth along Route 107.

The planning process that took place to develop this study involved community meetings guided by a steering committee of stakeholders. Through this process we heard from residents and business owners that traffic is the leading concern. But we also heard that residents who live along Highland Avenue often feel disconnected from their neighbors and the community at large. We heard that there is a desire for better community networks through mixed use projects that more fully incorporate outdoor spaces and multi-modal connections. The feedback from residents and business owners was combined with a market analysis that evaluated the kinds of uses and scales that the private market could support on Route 107.

With intentional and transparent actions, change on Highland Avenue can be guided appropriately in order to serve the greatest number of people who live in, work in, and visit this essential corridor and vibrant neighborhood. This study provides the framework to guide future policies and strategies to manage growth in a thoughtful and positive way.

Sincerely,

Kimberley Driscoll
Mayor
City of Salem

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Participants

The City of Salem assembled the Working Group indicated below, which included the two local ward councilors, local business leaders and residents, and the City's leaders of the project. Watertown-based Sasaki was the prime consultant for the study, responsible for visioning, stakeholder outreach, planning, and urban design. Sasaki worked closely with their subconsultant, Landwise, a Boston-based real estate advisory firm, for the creation of a market scan and analysis, as well as the generation of suggestions for future uses within the Corridor.

City of Salem

Tom Daniel, Director of Planning and Community Development

Amanda Chiancola, Senior Planner, Project Lead

Working Group Members

- Becky Christie
- Beth Debski
- Timothy Flynn (Councilor)
- David Hark
- Patricia Morsillo (Councilor)
- DJ Napolitano
- Lorelee Stewart
- David Surface

Sasaki

Tyler Patrick, Principal-in-charge

Paul Schlapobersky, Associate Principal, Project Manager

Diane Athaide, Urban Designer

Gwendolyn Sands, Planner

Landwise

Jon Tremontozzi, Principal

Brian Gridley, Strategic Planner

1.0

Introduction

Introduction

Commissioned by the City of Salem in mid-2020, the purpose of the Highland Avenue Corridor Study is to proactively create a vision for the future of the Corridor within a context of market dynamism in Salem. The study is intended to function as a starting point for a conversation with numerous stakeholders regarding the future of the Corridor, with a general goal for the study of arriving at an overall vision for the future, from which other action can be taken to realize this vision. The stated goals of the study at community meetings were:

- Stakeholder dialogue on the future of the Corridor
- A community vision for the Corridor
- Representation of vision by the consultant team
- Final report of the study (as a basis for further action)

The study spanned a period of approximately six months, following a timeline that was intentionally spaced out to enable a high-degree of community and Working Group consultation.

The Sasaki and Landwise consultant team was charged with highlighting key existing issues and opportunities within the Corridor, engaging stakeholders in dialogue,

and providing suggestions for future directions for the Corridor on the basis of that analysis and outreach.

The Highland Avenue Corridor fills a unique and important role in the life of the City of Salem; the Corridor functions as the “big box” store retail zone of the City (also attracting people from the surrounding region), as well as accommodating numerous smaller local businesses, and single-family residences. Several of the businesses along the Corridor are focused on medical-related services, due to the presence just north of the study area of the North Shore Medical Center - Salem Hospital, a large regional attractor.

Importantly, the Corridor is, and has been in the past a place where great change occurs on an ongoing basis, due to the commercial opportunities the Corridor affords to businesses. The result is that the Corridor has differing characteristics from generation to generation. Knowing this may help stakeholders understand that what seems fixed is in fact malleable, and that malleability should lead stakeholders to examine how the Corridor can be made better in the future. Whatever the future direction, this study has laid the groundwork for moving the Corridor in directions that can offer positive outcomes for multiple stakeholders.



Aerial View of Salem



Covid-19 Impacts: Current and Future

The study was carried out completely within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. While this created several challenges, it also generated unexpected opportunities, particularly in regard to receiving feedback at community meetings.

The team was able to tour the Corridor in a socially-distanced manner with Amanda Chiancola of the City, to gain an understanding of the context. Stops were made at several points along the Corridor, where it was possible to take photos and discuss challenges, opportunities, prior initiatives, stakeholder concerns, and other factors.

The City and the consultant team were able to carry out comprehensive community and Working Group consultation using available technology for video calls, webcasts, screen sharing, and online polling. These technologies were successfully utilized, to the extent that the project team felt that they afforded the opportunity for stakeholders who may have remained quiet at in-person workshops and presentations, to make their voices heard.

The potential future impacts of Covid-19 to market conditions were discussed during the course of the study, but given the ongoing nature of the pandemic, and a resulting lack of critical distance from its impacts, it was difficult, if not impossible, to discern future patterns that may emerge. There was, however, helpful discussion of the possibility that locally-based office space, for example, may become more desirable (where demand has been soft in the past) due to a potential increased desire for people to “remain local” after pandemic, adjusting their lifestyles to reduce commutes. The study has suggested frameworks that would be flexible enough to accommodate such societal shifts, many of which could be positive overall for the future of the Corridor, in the form of decreased commuter traffic, an enhanced expectation for local identity and quality-of-life within peoples’ residential areas, and a need for more multi-generational and full-spectrum housing product in neighborhoods.

The Current Study: Rationale, and Objectives

Highland Avenue Corridor is highly successful in its ability to convey large volumes of vehicular traffic towards Route 128 and towards neighboring towns, and to provide access to local and regional commercial and retail amenities through the numerous businesses that line the Corridor. These are important functions that the Corridor fulfills. In addition, the Corridor is also home to many households within Salem. Forming an important part in a regional network of roadway connectivity, and retail and commercial successes have, however, simultaneously created some long-term challenges for the Corridor itself, and for Salem. Heavy traffic, and potentially dangerous road conditions along the Corridor, challenges for residential stakeholders surrounding and on the Corridor, an overall lack of a

sense of place surrounding the Corridor, and aesthetic challenges stemming from the nature of highway-side businesses (uniform low-scale architecture, widely varying signage, large parking lots, etc.), and increased stresses for local residents, are all issues that the Corridor confronts.

The intention of the current study is to draw out these and other issues, and to identify potential solutions that will be workable within the strictures placed upon the Corridor. These solutions are, at this initial stage, high-level propositions relating to potential future scenarios for the Corridor, based on existing conditions and market analysis. The goal of the study is to create a foundation for additional steps that reflect a community-based vision for the Corridor's future.

PROJECT VISION:

The Highland Avenue Corridor will:

- Be a place where neighborhoods are connected to each other to increase a sense of community
- Become more than just a means to get from one place to another
- Have an identity as a district
- Become its own place to be, with different ways to get there

Project Schedule

Phase 1 : Existing Conditions Analysis and Market Scan

1.5 Months

- Kick Off Meeting
- Establish Project Goals
- Corridor Visit
- Data Collection
- Base Materials Mapping
- Opportunities and Constraints
- Market Scan
- Development Program Scenarios

Phase 2: Corridor Framework and Development Scenarios

2 Months

- Development Framework
- Land Use Program Scenarios

Phase 3: Action Plan and Final Report

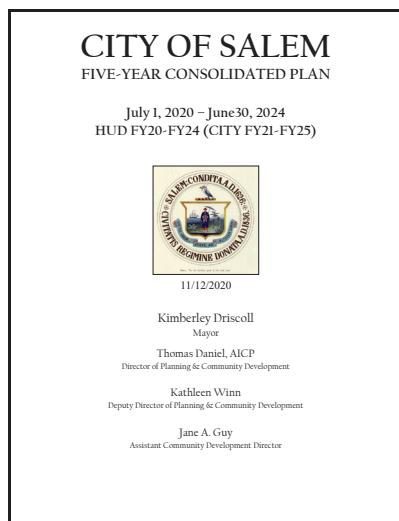
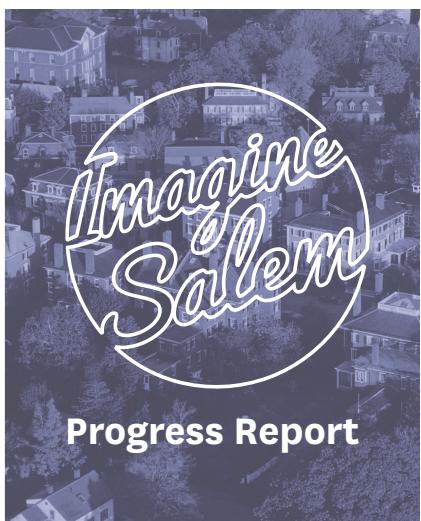
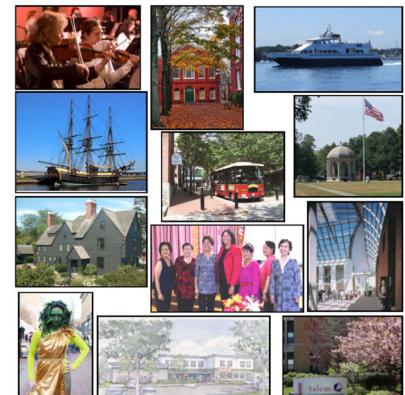
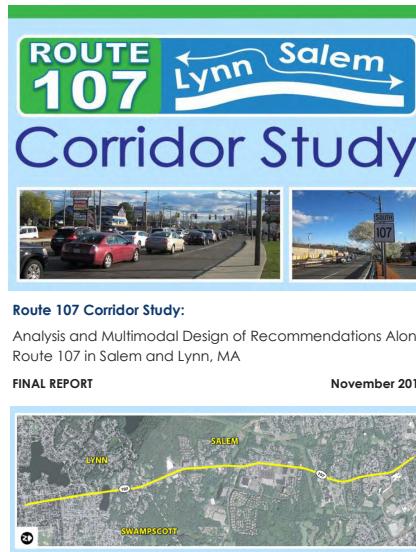
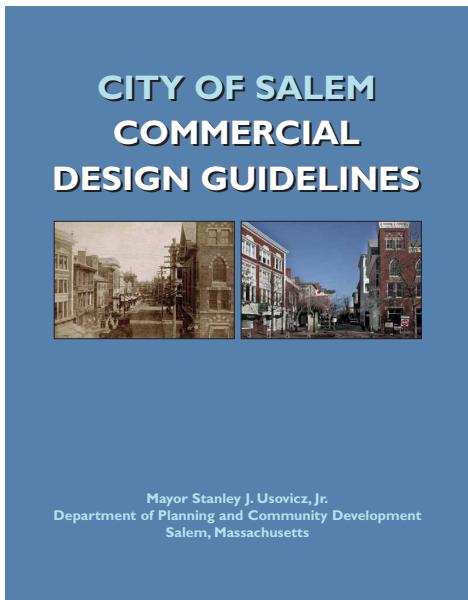
1.5 Months

- Selection of preferred Scenarios
- Development of Preferred Scenarios
- Draft Report
- Final Report

Reference Materials

Past Studies and Plans

Several past studies for Salem overall and for areas near the Highland Avenue Corridor were reviewed as part of the study.



2.0

Site Analysis

Study Area

Project Physical Context

The current study focuses on the length of Highland Avenue that is a four lane (two lanes in each direction), divided highway, within the boundaries of the City of Salem. This coincides with a stretch of Highland Avenue that generally begins at its southern end just southward of the Walmart property, and extends at the northern end roughly to the high school. In an eastward and westward direction, the study area generally encompasses residential zones lying east and west of the Corridor, and is expanded in the east to encompass the large 120 Swampscott Road property.

A starting point for the study was the consideration of several large and medium-sized properties within the Corridor that are, or may become available in the future, for redevelopment. This list of properties was by no means comprehensive nor determinative; the study was intended to generate a vision framework that is flexible enough to accommodate future availability of these and other properties. The properties that formed this starting point, with one or two additions, had been identified in the 2018 “What’s Happening On Highland?” document created by the City.



Highland Avenue Regional Context

Challenges

The primary challenges for the Corridor are as follows:

A Business-As-Usual Approach

As with any established zone of this type, there is understandable inertia regarding change, due to familiarity with the existing condition. An approach to the future that derives from this approach would see incremental by-rights development occurring opportunistically within the Corridor, or with small, localized changes to zoning (or approval via zoning board of appeals for individual initiatives) on a property-by-property basis. In the absence of a vision, this is what occurs naturally in all cases, not just along the Highland Avenue Corridor. This can already be seen along Highland Avenue with the advancement of larger current projects, such as the Trader's Way and Overlook Acres residential developments, as well as recent initiatives to convert other big sites directly along the Corridor to purely residential uses. While the provision of additional residential product in the metro Boston area is positive overall, questions arise about whether a future prevalence of these types of projects directly on the Corridor is desirable.

Three concerns with such an approach, overall, are: 1) Sites along the Corridor - in particular, large sites - if developed individually without thought for the larger composition, may degrade the Corridor's retail and commercial offerings; 2) There is no synergy of action between efforts, leading to missed potential opportunities to leverage larger projects in particular for the betterment of the Corridor overall and the creation of a sense of place; 3) It does not fundamentally address any of the large, pressing issues facing the Corridor, many of which are safety and quality-of-life related (traffic).

Highland Avenue (Highway 107) Right-Of-Way (R.O.W.)

In online polling of community members, and in general conversations with the City and Working Group, traffic within the Corridor consistently rose to the position of being the single largest issue. The complexity of this subject in this study area cannot be overstated, due to the fact that large vehicle volumes are simultaneously the lifeblood of the Corridor - generating opportunity for the businesses along the Corridor, as well as responding to the Corridor's role as a conduit for commuting - and the greatest challenge towards achieving a sense of place or a sense of neighborhood for the numerous residents living within the study area. Adding to the complexities of traffic management on Highland Avenue in the Corridor, the road's right-of-way is within the purview of MassDOT, and not that of the City of Salem. The practical impacts of this are that most decisions relating to the character of the roadway cannot be made locally.

Surrounding Road Network

Highland Avenue is, for the duration of its length through the Corridor, a major arterial road that has highway characteristics due to the fact that it is divided by a barrier. The roads that connect directly into Highland Avenue at signalized intersections are minor arterial or collector roads that typically connect to elsewhere in the City of Salem, and to other locations (Route 128, Swampscott, etc.). All additional roads within the study area are local roads that do not form part of an interconnected network. This last condition means that there are very limited alternatives for traffic flow to Highland Avenue itself - all traffic within its "catch basin" is channeled onto and across it. This creates challenges in particular for local residents, who cannot typically drive from the streets they live on to other places without engaging with Highland Avenue.

Parcelization

Parcelization of properties within and surrounding the Corridor is a legacy of decisions made decades, if not centuries, before. This leads to a condition of very broad and diverse ownership of mostly small to medium-sized parcels. Notable exceptions to this are the sites accommodating the “big box” retail businesses. A patchwork quilt of ownership presents challenges for land assembly and the creation of future projects that can create their own centers of gravity within the Corridor. These issues are not insurmountable, but are a factor in any considerations of future directions for the Corridor.

Overall Basic Nature of The Corridor

The basic nature of the Corridor immediately to either side of Highland Avenue is highway-side retail and services businesses (with some residential mixed in), many of which are regional as well as local attractors. Zoning has been created over time to support these uses, as they have been deemed essential to the well-being of the broader City of Salem; the success of certain businesses along the Corridor bears this out. The fundamental basic nature of the Corridor, therefore, has historically elevated practical usage - easy access, ample surface parking, large retail stores, drive-through eateries, small office suites, etc. - above other considerations. These amenities are not insignificant, and this translates into challenges for “changing the face” of the Corridor to be more of a “place” that anchors the area it serves. These realities impact everything from traffic volumes to aesthetics along the Corridor.

Opportunities

Current and future opportunities for the Corridor are:

Housing Demand

Strong demand exists for housing in Salem, as a result of larger regional forces in the residential market. There is

broad demand for all housing types. Private developer interest in sites on and around the Corridor reflects this demand. While not all sites are suitable for residential use, accommodation of this demand on appropriate sites supports the success of local businesses, schools, and the creation of neighborhoods. While there are legitimate concerns about increased traffic on roads in and around the Corridor, aligning residential growth with other initiatives (such as a potential South Salem MBTA Commuter Rail Station, walkable neighborhoods, Salem Skipper, and the City’s upcoming municipal car share program), supports the creation of residential opportunities for a broad spectrum of people.

Potential Demand For Other Uses

Particular types of regional “big box” and local convenience retail and services predominate along the Corridor, but there is potentially demand in the market for the accommodation of other uses. These might include increased office space (as mentioned in “Covid-19 Impacts”), full-spectrum residential supporting diverse household types (including seniors), destination restaurants, and even a “lifestyle center” that combines a number of uses with outdoor amenity space. These uses are growing along other similar corridors in the region and nationally, and aside from broadening economic opportunity, they contribute to enhanced “sense of place.”

Regional Medical Center

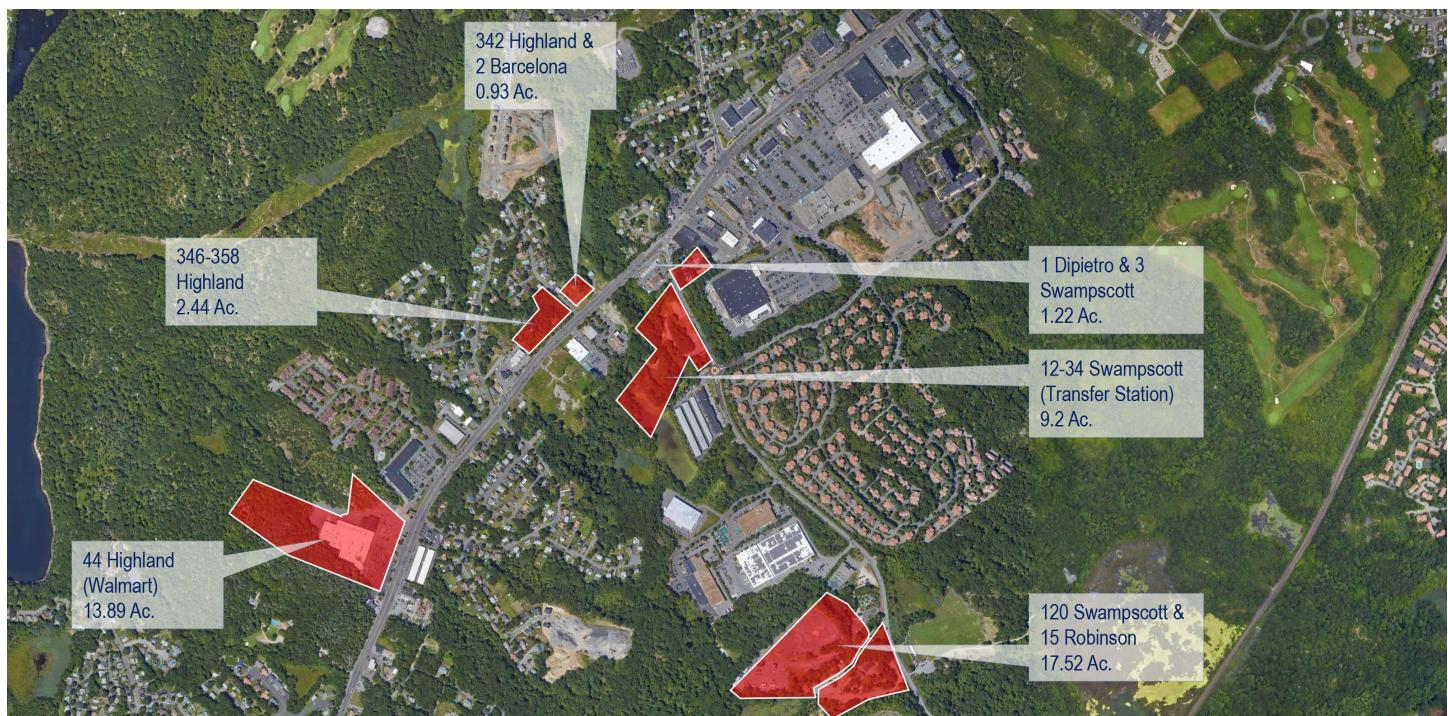
The North Shore Medical Center - Salem Hospital, located on Highland Avenue a short distance north of the Corridor study area, is a regional attractor. As such, several medical-related businesses have located along the Corridor. There is potential for the future co-location of such affiliated businesses within the Corridor, in one or more medical office park-type arrangements. This is an ongoing opportunity for growth in the Corridor.

Changes in Attitudes

When the current configuration of Highland Avenue was

conceived, in the mid-to-late 20th century, emphasis was on moving as much traffic as efficiently as possible. This led to the highway-like appearance of Highland Avenue today. While it is still important to convey traffic efficiently through the Corridor, and will continue to be so, there is increasing demand regionally and nationally for the balancing of this need with others. Initiatives in

this realm include the accommodation of pedestrians, cyclists, transit, and the general calming of areas impacted by major roadways.



Existing Conditions

The Corridor occupies a zone of gentle, wooded hills characterized by large quantities of rocky ledge. Single family and town home neighborhoods nested into the wooded landscape surround the Corridor, while the zone most proximate to Highway 107 accommodates additional multi-family residential buildings. Along the Corridor itself, single family homes - vestiges of when the road was narrower and slower in speed - are interspersed with small and mid-size convenience businesses, medical office buildings, and large "big box"

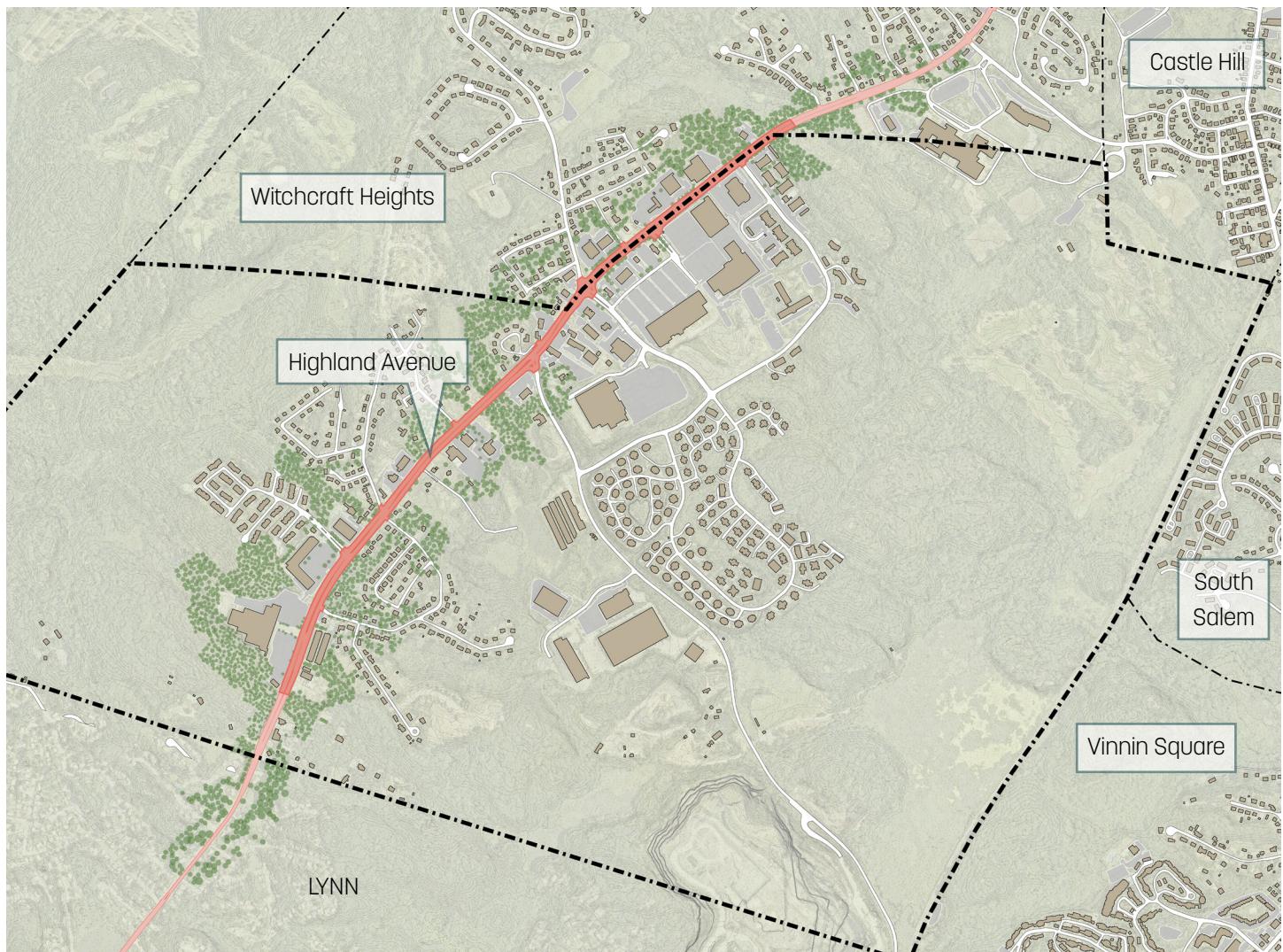
stores. The right-of-way of Highland Avenue consists of two lanes in each direction, separated by an armco-type steel traffic barrier in the middle. Pedestrian sidewalks line either side of the roadway. Turning opportunities are limited by the continuous barrier to a small number of signalized intersections that see a large volume of turning movements due to this condition. Buildings along the Corridor, with the exception of multi-family residential, are predominantly single-story.





Existing Conditions Analysis

Neighborhoods



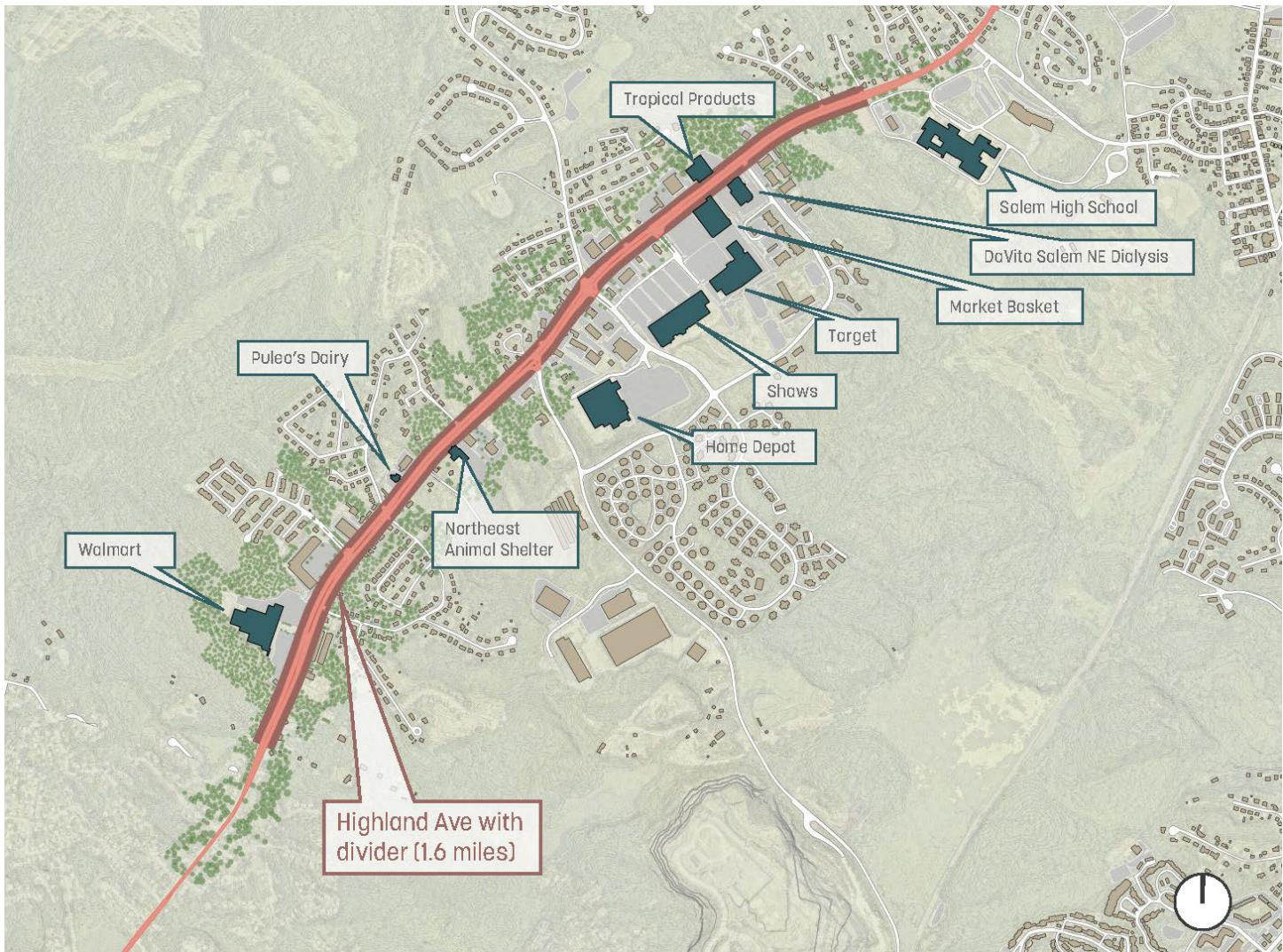
Neighborhoods encompassing the Highland Avenue Corridor

The Corridor crosses several neighborhoods within Salem, traversing pure residential areas, as well as a mix of residential and retail.

LEGEND

 Highland Avenue (107)

The Highland Avenue Right-of-Way



Extent of divided roadway along Highland Avenue, with bus stops indicated

North and South of the Corridor, Highland Avenue is a single lane in either direction, without any center barrier. It is only for its duration in the actual Corridor that it is two lanes in either direction, with a center barrier, for approximately 1.6 miles total.

This condition is somewhat unusual, as the more normal arrangement of roads would be a progression from narrower to wider, to freeway, rather than a reversion to the narrower state again. The condition at Highland Avenue reflects a need to absorb a large number of vehicles on the road at any given time along this specific stretch of road.

LEGEND

- Highland Avenue
- Highland Avenue with divider

Ecological Conditions



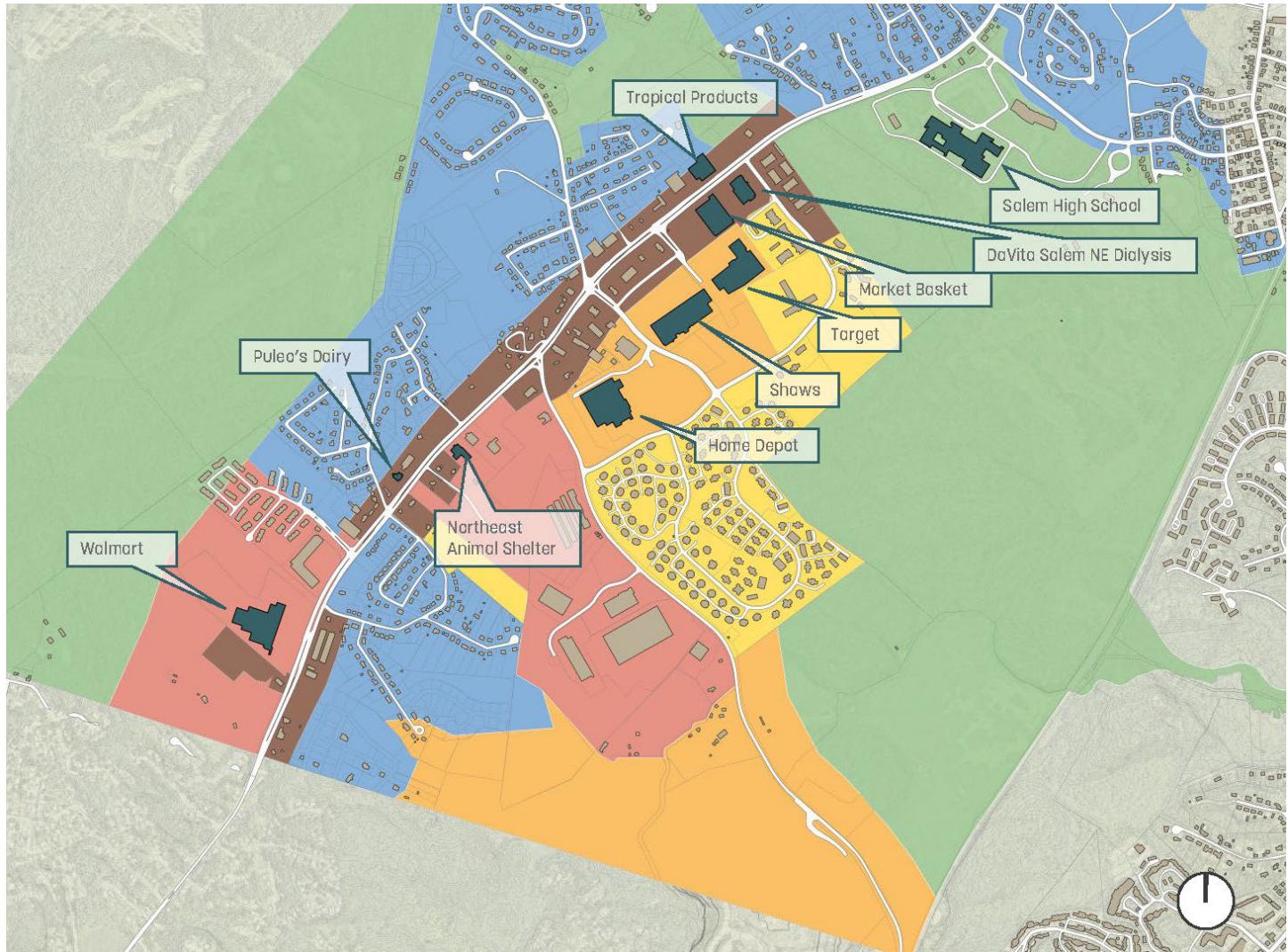
Ecological constraints and natural features within the Highland Avenue Corridor

This plan shows the extent of natural elements in and around the Corridor. These are not readily apparent from Highland Avenue itself, but become more visible a short way in from either side of Highland Avenue. The geology of large amounts of rocky ledge combines with streams and their buffers, as well as large amounts of wooded land, to create a complex tapestry of natural elements. These elements can be brought more to the fore in the future life of the Corridor, as suggested in this study, to enhance identity and amenity. Two of the most commonly expressed desires for the Corridor were “greener” and “calmer”; leveraging of these elements will assist with achieving both of those goals.

LEGEND

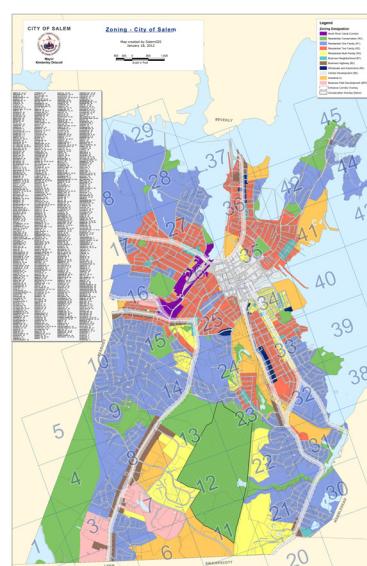
	Wetlands
	Wetland Buffer Zone (100')
	Ponds / Streams
	Pond / Stream Buffer Zone (100')

Zoning



Current Zoning of the Highland Avenue Corridor

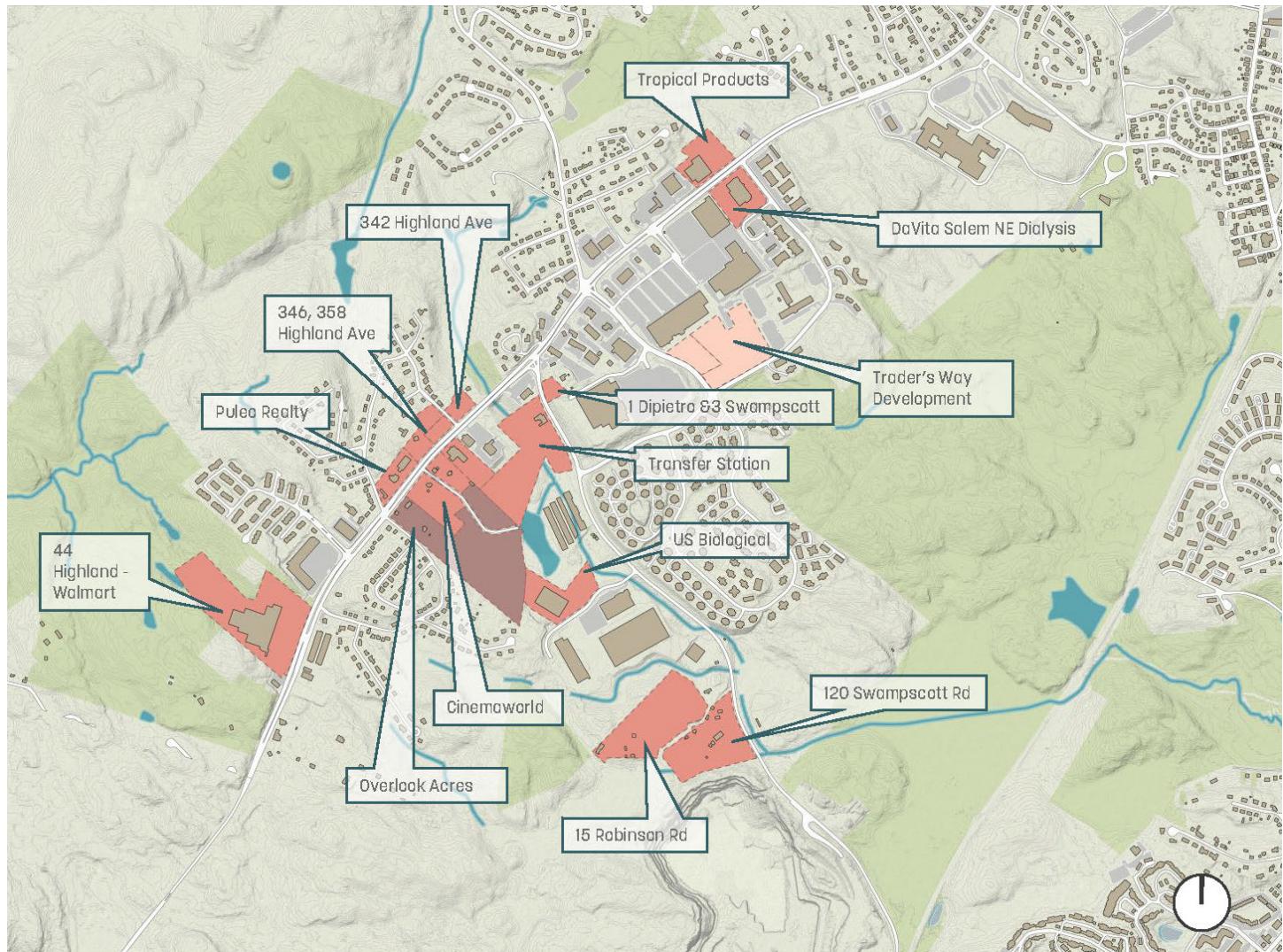
Current zoning for the Corridor reveals the patchwork nature of the Corridor's identity. The largest impact to the character of the Corridor is the "Business Highway" category, which lines either side of the Highland Avenue right-of-way for most of its length, as well as the "Industrial" category, within which the big box stores at the northern end of the Corridor are accommodated. Selective rezoning will assist with attaining the goals that support the vision articulated in this study for the future of the Corridor.



LEGEND

■	Business Highway
■	Business Park Development
■	Residential One Family
■	Residential Multi Family
■	Industrial
■	Residential Conservation

Potential Sites for Redevelopment



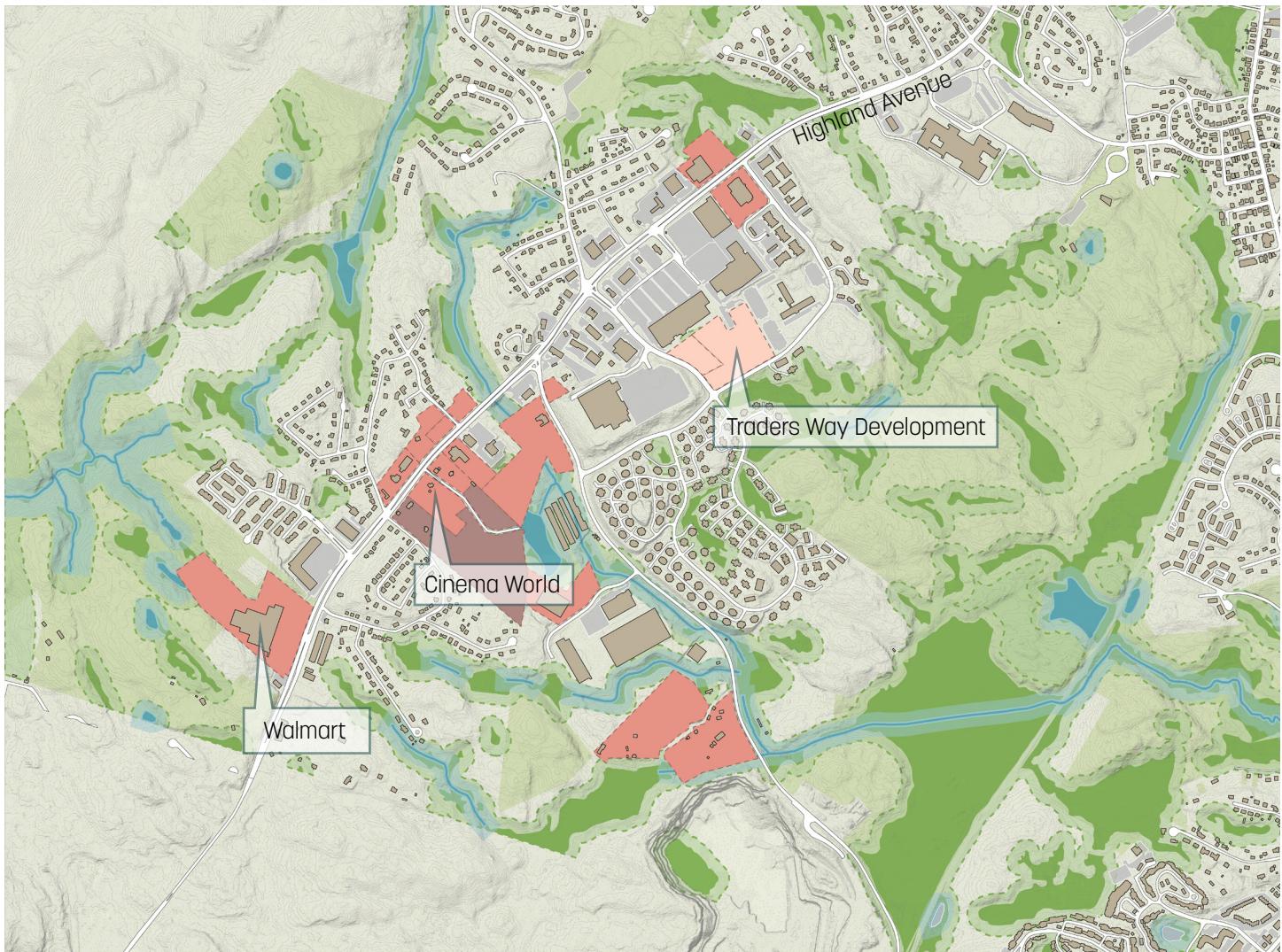
Key properties either under development or that may be available for future redevelopment

The starting point for studying opportunities for the future within the Corridor was a variety of sites within the Corridor that were generally identified in the 2018 “What’s Happening on Highland?” document. This is by no means a comprehensive list, but was intended to catalyze exploration and discussion. As such, this list is not intended to suggest that other properties are not candidates for future redevelopment, or that identified properties necessarily will be redeveloped. Some of the properties, such as the Transfer Station site, “Cinemaworld” and “Overlook Acres” may require significant environmental remediation due to ground and/or water conditions affected by prior uses.

LEGEND

- Projects Underway
- Projects in Permitting
- Parcels Under Construction

Potential Sites and Ecological Conditions



An overlay of the key opportunity sites with environmental constraints reveals a complex picture of future opportunities for the Corridor. The combination of these elements - sites plus natural elements - provides many clues to the future potential for the Corridor.

LEGEND	
■	Projects Underway
■	Projects in Permitting
■	Parcels Under Construction
■	Wetlands
■	Wetland Buffer Zone (100')
■	Ponds / Streams
■	Pond / Streams Buffer Zone (100')

3.0

Market Scan

Market Overview

Framework

Landwise conducted a market scan and analysis as part of the study. For the purposes of categorization of uses, the following terms were utilized:

- “Retail”: Supermarkets, stores, restaurants, services (gas stations, etc.)
- “Commercial”: Offices, light manufacturing/ workshop (eg. Technology Way businesses)
- “Residential”: All types – single family to townhomes to mid-rise multi-family

The market scan is important for ensuring that the planning effort is grounded in market reality. Plans that respect and respond to market forces are more likely to be implemented and achieve success than those that chose to ignore economic forces at play in the community.

A market scan has three essential components:

Economic and Demographic Context

It is important to understand the economic and demographic forces at play within the subject site community. This includes looking at employment growth which creates economic opportunity and “spin-off” demand for housing, services, and goods. Additional factors such as growth in households, income levels, educational attainment, commuting patterns, will also impact which asset classes are in the highest demand, and how resources are likely to be allocated to them.

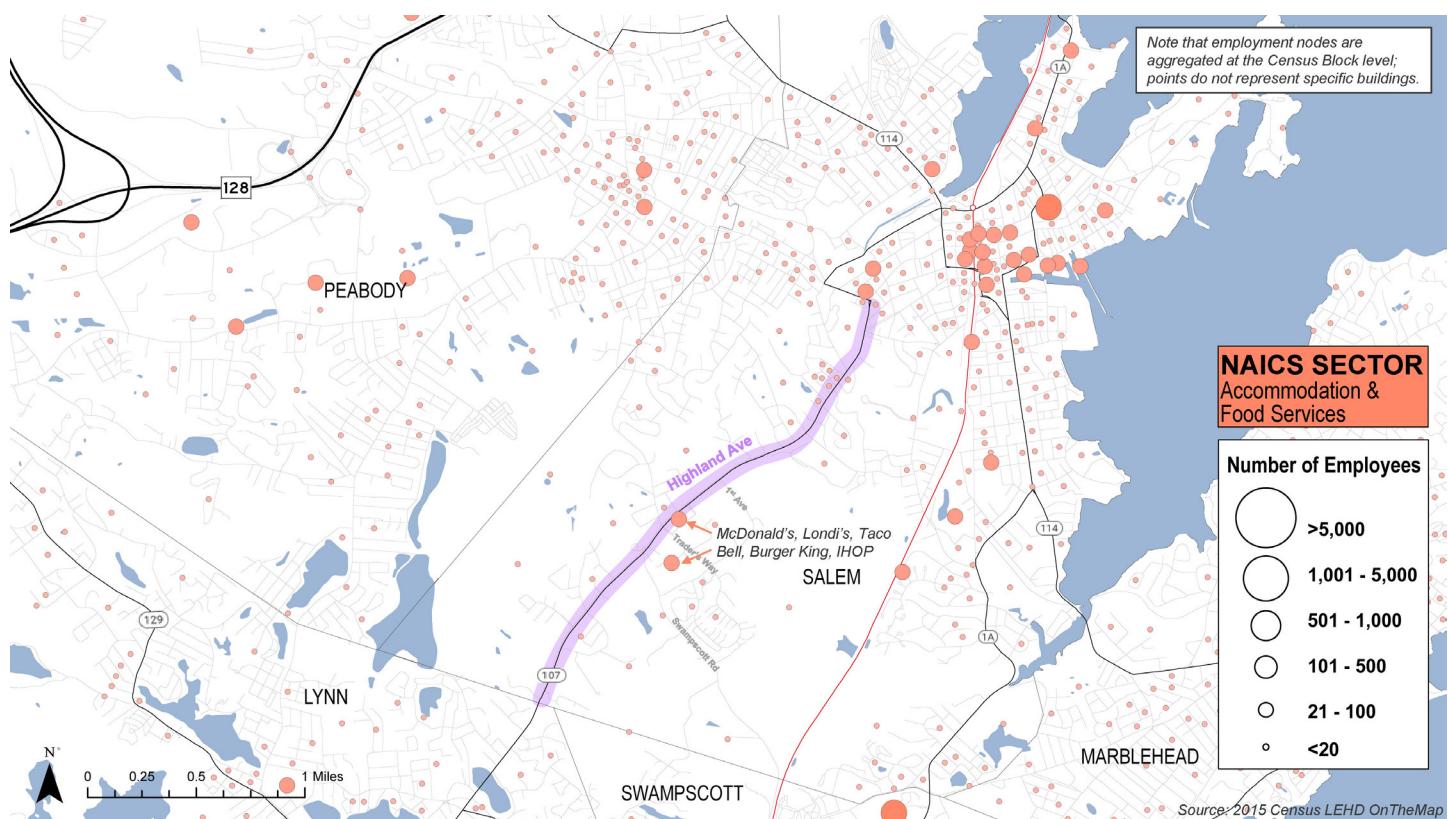
Supply/Demand Balance

Understanding whether the supply and demand balance of various asset classes is a critical component of the market study. If there are gaps between the level of supply and demand the market is likely to respond to them over time by adding additional supply, adjusting price levels, or converting underutilized assets to alternative uses over time. Understanding the balance is important before investing in the construction of new buildings.

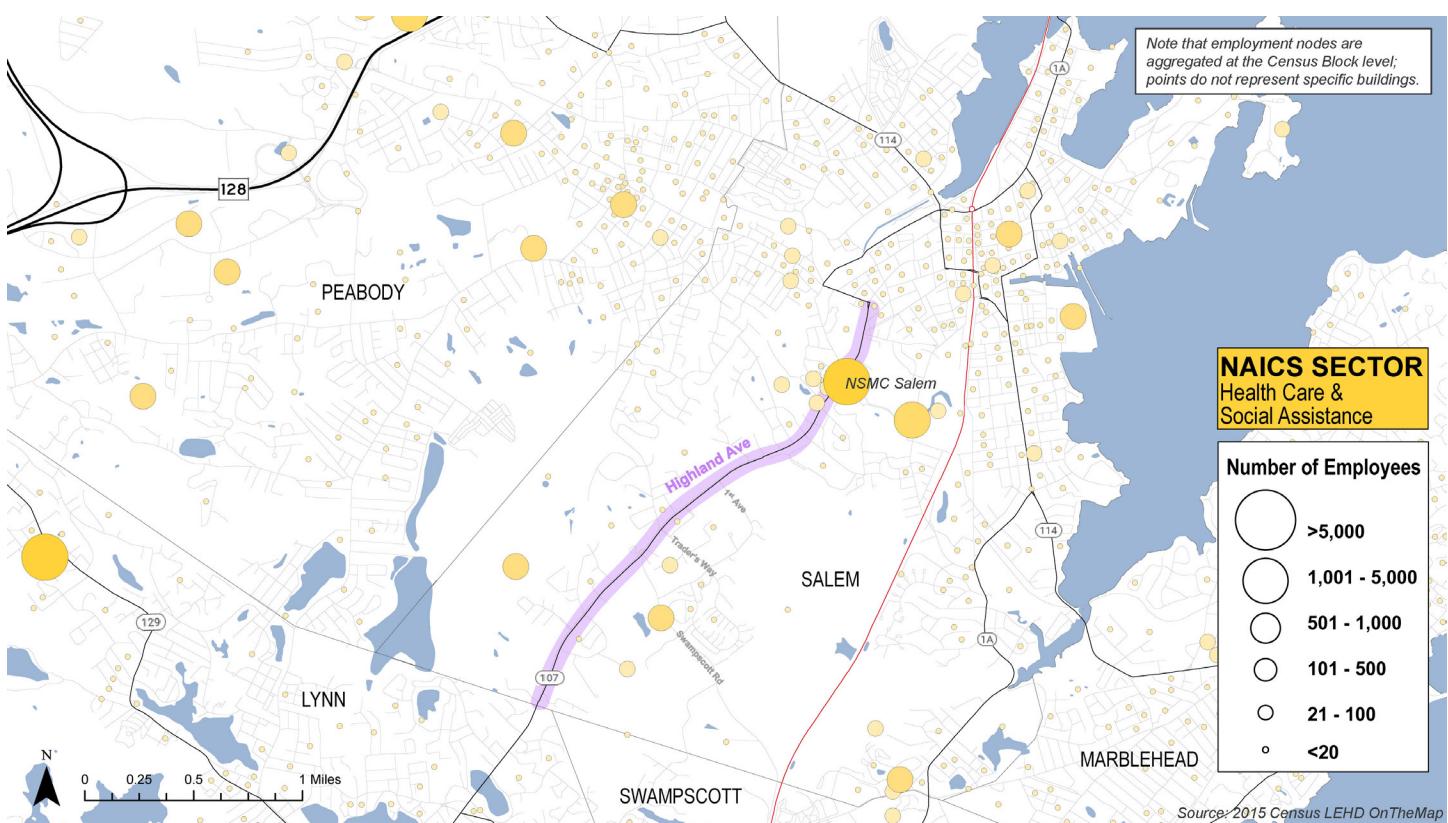
Market Trends

Real estate is notoriously cyclical, and each land use can peak, plateau, and bottom out at different points in time. Being attune to the cycles and understanding the factors that may cause a particular asset class to quickly heat up or fall out of favor is important for making informed real time decisions about future allocations of capital.

Job Sector Analysis

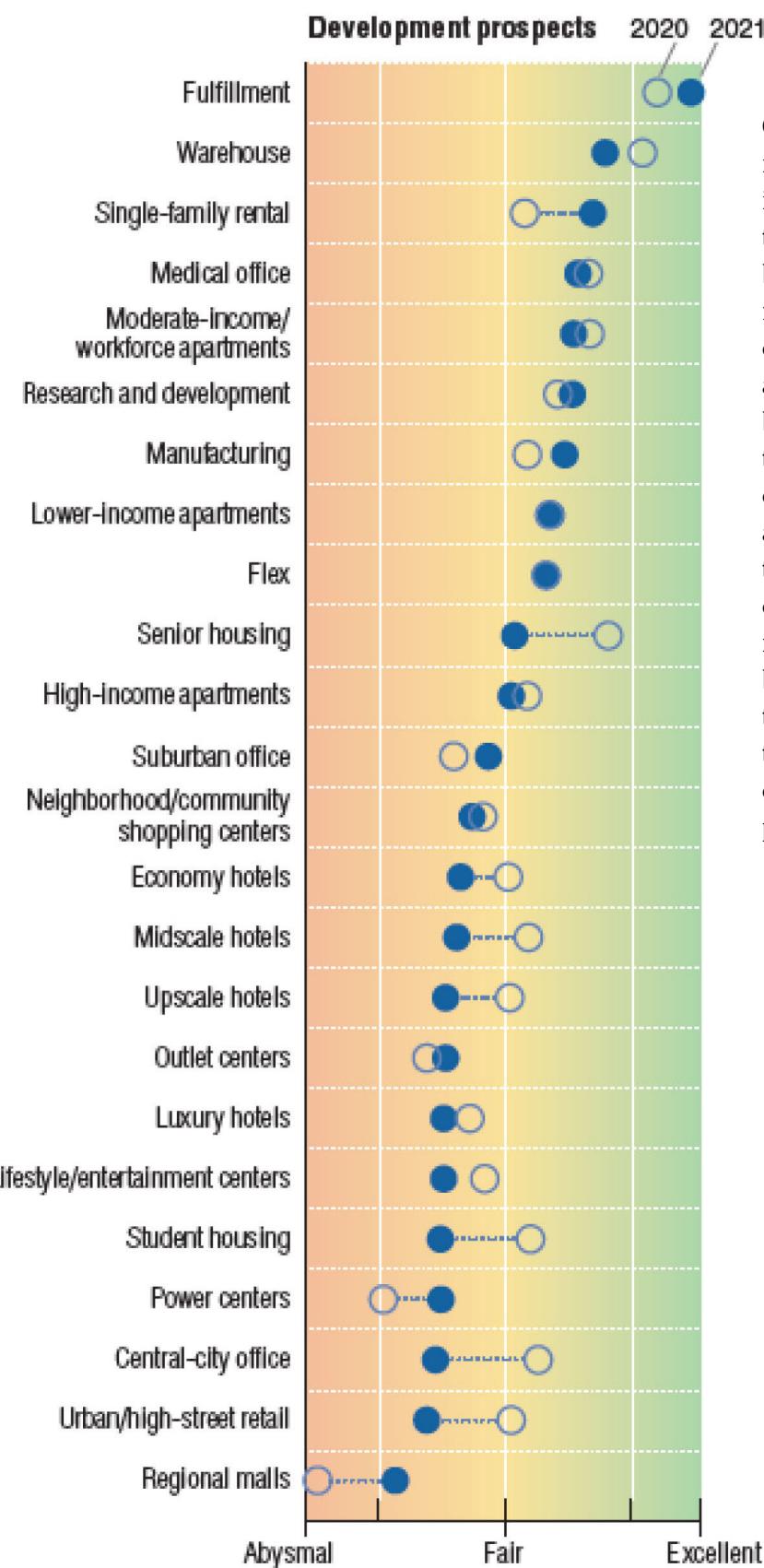


NAICS Sector - Accommodation and Food Services Map



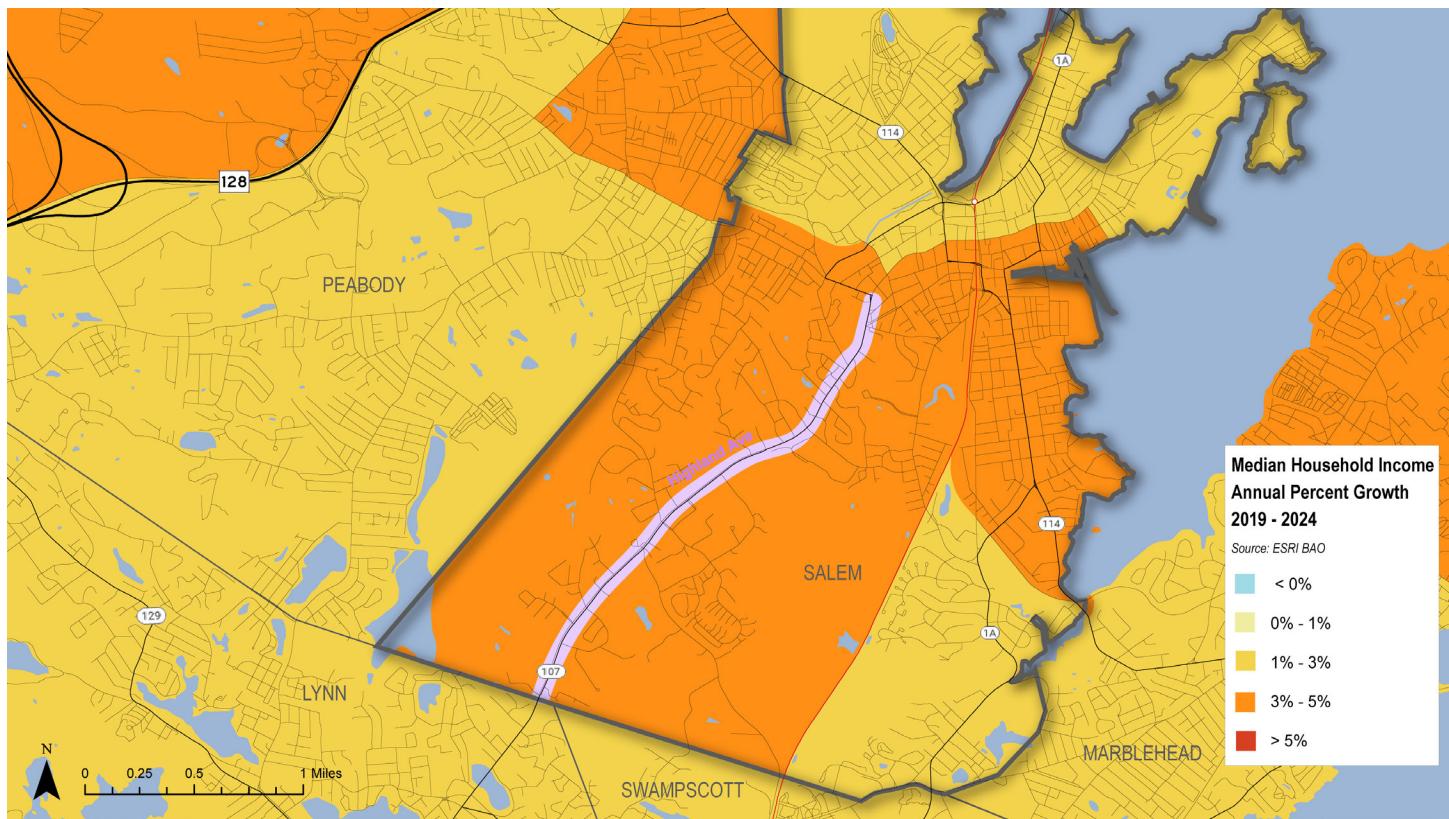
NAICS Sector - Health Care and Social Assistance Map

Development Prospects

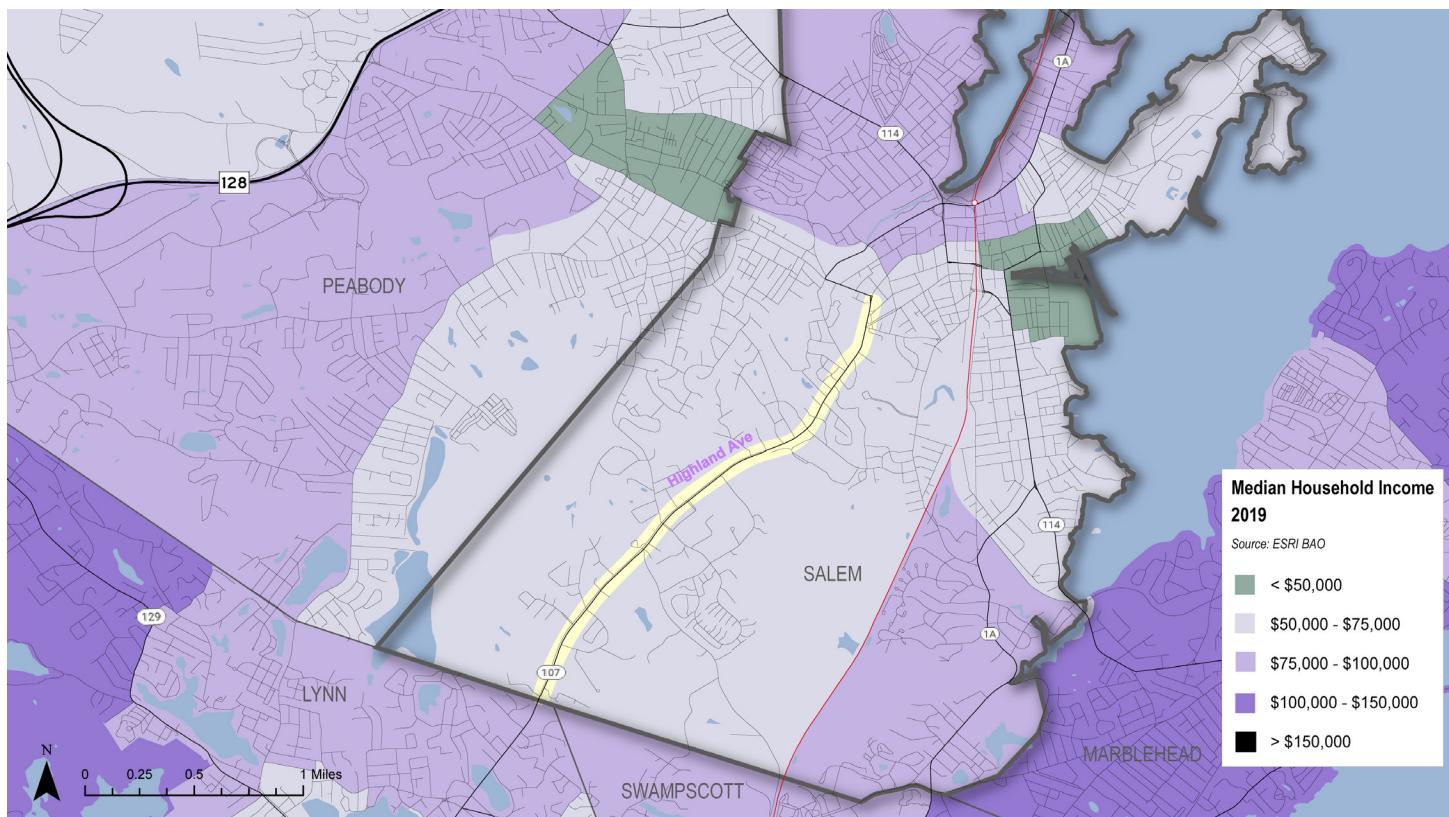


Over the past year Covid-19 has accelerated a number of trends that were already percolating in the marketplace causing certain land uses to move faster than usual through cycles of boom and bust. Of note is the strength in fulfillment, warehouse, and distribution uses caused by the uptick in online commerce, a trend that has been rapidly accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The flip side of the coin is that regional malls and shopping centers of all stripes have suffered immensely as shops and restaurants have been forced to reduce capacity, alter business models, or close altogether due to state public health restrictions. Additional land uses that have been negatively impacted include hotels due to severe reduction in business and leisure travel, and office uses, due to most white-collar employers shifting to “work-from-home” platforms during the majority of 2020.

Income Analysis



Median Household Income Annual Percentage Growth Map



Median Household Income Map

Summary Matrix

Land Use	Market Strength	Site Suitability	Economic/ Tax Impact	Low Level of Competition	Low Level of Traffic Impact	TOTAL
Residential	***	**	*	***	***	12
Medical Office	***	***	***	*	**	12
Office	*	**	***	**	**	10
Industrial / Light Manufacturing	***	**	**	**	*	10
Retail/Restaurant	*	***	***	*	*	9

* = Low Score ** = Medium Score *** = High Score

Market Strength – Landwise judgment of how healthy the market is for the given use in the Boston Metro and along the Corridor

Site Suitability – How appropriate the use is for a typical site located along the Corridor factoring in zoning, market requirements, visibility, site needs

Economic/Tax Impact - The ability for the use to create jobs and generate a net positive fiscal impact

Low Level of Competition – The level of competition in the local market/submarket for the specific use

Traffic Impact – The amount of traffic that will be generated from the target use

Takeaways

Existing Conditions

- Medical employment clustered around the NSMC Salem Hospital is the primary driver of economic activity along the Corridor
- Big box retailers continue to draw significant activity along the Corridor and these users appear to be healthy relative to national trends
- The Corridor features a number of chain restaurant options but lacks options for independent and ethnic categories
- The Corridor is made up primarily of middle-income households and it is experiencing positive household growth and meaningful growth in income levels

Future Conditions

- Recent expansion in the NSMC Salem Hospital cluster and the closing of a hospital facility in Lynn indicate that future growth in the medical space is likely to occur.
- Retail and restaurant uses are likely to continue to face headwinds from the Covid-19 disruption and the rise of e-commerce and so expansion of these uses will be challenging in the near term.
- The growth in advanced manufacturing, logistics, warehousing uses is likely to continue so sites that are well suited for these uses may have an advantage
- The need for affordable/workforce housing is likely to remain strong in the Salem area due to the lack of supply

Case Studies

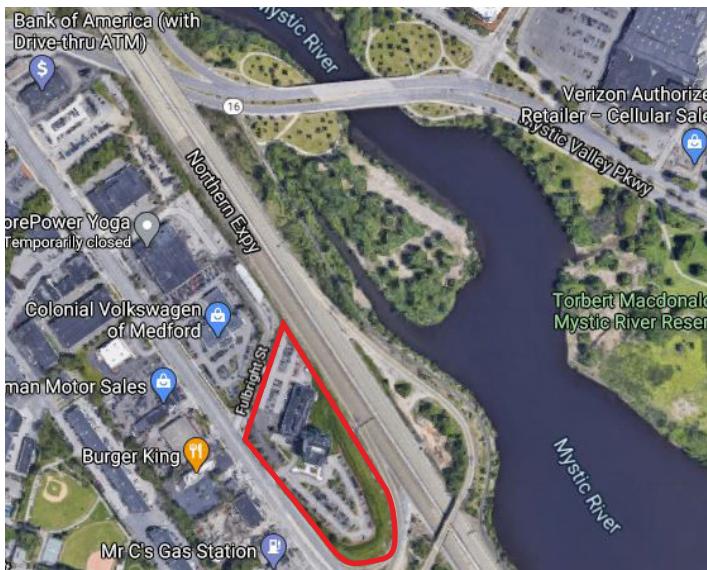
Office

Century Bank headquarters

400 Mystic Ave, Medford

- Class A Office Building
- Year Built: 2005
- Building Space: 88,000 square feet, 5 stories
- Lot Size: 4.87 acres
- FAR: 0.42
- Parking Ratio: 3.0 / 1,000 SF
- Traffic Count: 22,000 VPD (2018)

A new 5-story 50,000 square foot building was built adjacent to the existing 3-story building. This building is located on Mystic Ave. in Medford, a similar corridor that is highly trafficked with a variety of uses.



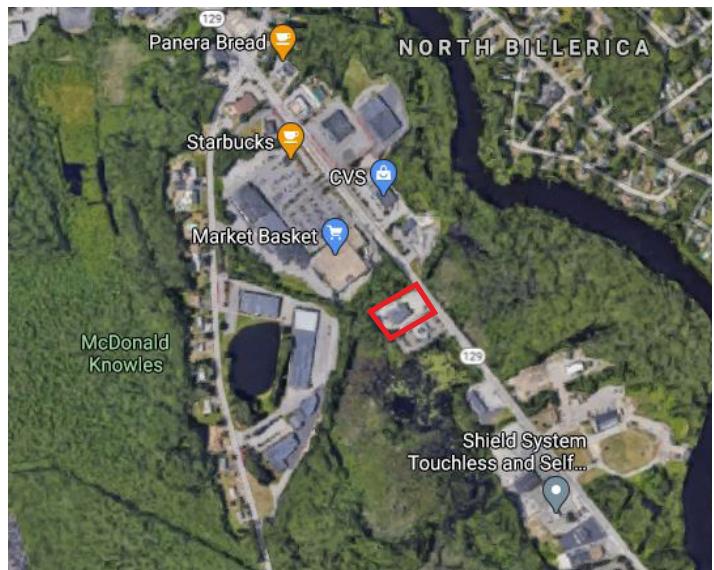
Medical Office

Route 3A Medical Office Complex

221 Boston Rd, Billerica

- Year Built: 2019 (renovated)
- Building Space: 12,500 square feet, 2 stories
- Lot Size: 1.64 acres
- FAR: 0.17
- Parking Ratio: 5.5 / 1,000 SF
- Traffic Count: 32,000 VPD (2018)

This medical office building has 6 separate suites that can be combined for larger spaces if needed. It underwent extensive renovations in 2019, including an entire new façade. It is located on Route 3A in Billerica, a similar corridor with almost identical traffic counts to Highland Avenue . (35,000 VPD).



Light MFG / IND

Salem Glass

3 Technology Way, Salem

- Year Built: 2002
- Building Space: 64,000 square feet
- Lot Size: 4.4 acres
- FAR: 0.33
- Parking Ratio: 1.3 / 1,000 SF

One of the most successful companies on Technology Way. Their success has inspired other similar companies to move, creating an industrial cluster at Technology Way.



Retail

St. Jean's Credit Union

370 Highland Avenue, Salem

- Year Built: 2018
- Building Space: 7,200 square feet
- Lot Size: 1-acre lot (this building shares a lot with the neighboring Puleo's Dairy building. The 1-acre is an estimate of the land that St. Jean's sits on)
- FAR: 0.17
- Parking Ratio: 5.5 / 1,000 SF
- Traffic Count: 35,000 VPD (2020)

Built by Groom Construction (a Salem-based company).



Housing Precedents



Residence in Vinnin Square, Swampscott



Clarendon, Arlington VA



Westside at Shady Grove, Rockville MD



Vardarda Housing, Sweden



Gunbarrel District, CO

Retail and Restaurant Precedents



The Domain Rock Rose, Austin TX



The Avenue, Washington DC



Branchline Restaurant, Watertown MA



Legal Seafoods, The Street, Chestnut Hill MA



Recess, Chicago IL



Semolina, Medford MA

Medical Office Precedents



Dental Office, Mesa AZ



Visions Healthcare, Dedham MA



Carriage Animal Hospital, Lombard IL



Apollo Medical Office, Cary NC



Band and Wire Orthodontics, Illinois



St. Vincent Medical Center

4.0

Engagement

Engagement

During the course of the study, three Working Group meetings and two community meetings were held virtually, in webcast format. Input was solicited using online polling, Miro boards (digital work boards where comments were collected during the webcasts, and posted via digital sticky notes to the boards).

Meetings were led by Sasaki, with input from Landwise and the City.

Working Group meeting dates were:

Meeting 1: September 29, 2020

Meeting 2: December 16, 2020

Meeting 3: February 3, 2021

Community meeting dates were:

Meeting 1: October 28, 2020 - Corridor Analysis, Market Scan, Findings

Meeting 2: January 12, 2021 - Framework, "Big Picture Ideas" (Future Scenarios)

“Walking (along Highland Avenue) feels very dangerous due to speed of cars”

“The ability to turn around on Highland Avenue is important”

“Improving (the big box zone) would make a big difference because there are a lot of people who live nearby”

The “sliders”, shown to the right, were a way of getting the Working Group and Salem community members to think about what environment they would like for Highland Avenue . Using the idea of the slider conveys the different spectrums that Highland Avenue . operates on, and the ways that different improvements could change the nature of the Corridor.

What is right for Highland Avenue?



Belmar, Lakewood CO



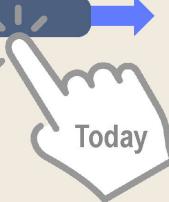
Mosaic, Fairfax VA

Pedestrian

Automobile



Future?



Today

Experience at Ground Level – Sense of Place



Daybreak, UT



Azalea, South Gate, CA

Local

Regional



Today

Future?

Overall Function, and Look and Feel



Stonebridge at Potomac Town Center, Woodbridge, VA



Westbrook, BC, Canada

Commercial /
Institutional

Residential



Today



Future?

Program, Uses – Sense of Place

Community Meeting Analysis

Community Meeting 1 - October 28, 2020

During the first virtual community meeting, residents provided insights into the way they currently use Highland Avenue, and the challenges and opportunities they see in it. Multiple forms of engagement were used to provide the residents diverse opportunities to think about the Corridor and give feedback. The virtual nature of the meeting meant that all participants were engaging solely through digital platforms, which while different from a traditional public meeting, still yielded significant amounts of engagement.

During Community Meeting 1 Sasaki and Landwise presented on the initial analysis completed on Highland Avenue, and then the majority of the meeting was used for residents to provide comments and feedback. The first activity was conducted using PollEV, a system that allows for a survey question to be answered and analyzed in real time. The questions and analysis of analysis are shown in the following three graphics. The residents were then shown boards in Miro that asked them to provide thoughts on the current challenges of Highland Avenue , the opportunities of the Corridor and then their aspirations for what an ideal corridor would look like. Those boards and comments are displayed on the following spread.

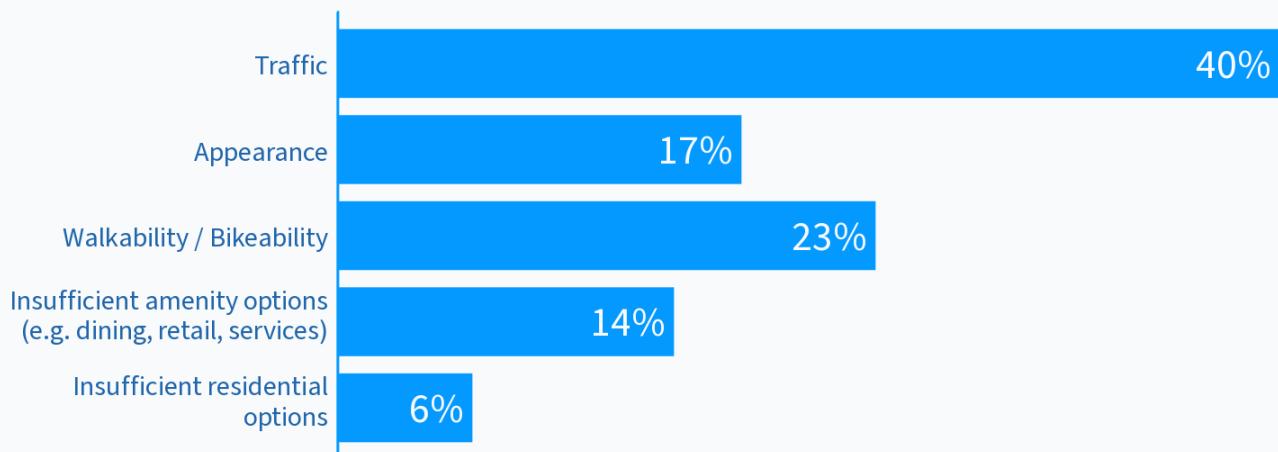
What one word best describes your ideal corridor of the future? (eg. calmer, vibrant, greener, slower, restaurants, housing, affordable, etc.)



The above graphic displays a word cloud created by community members responses to the question: "What one word best describes your ideal corridor for the future." The biggest words (walkable, calmer, restaurants, greener, safer, slower) represent the words

used the most by participants. From this grouping of words we can begin to image the future environment of Highland Avenue . These key characteristics were used to create the proposed scenarios later on in the process.

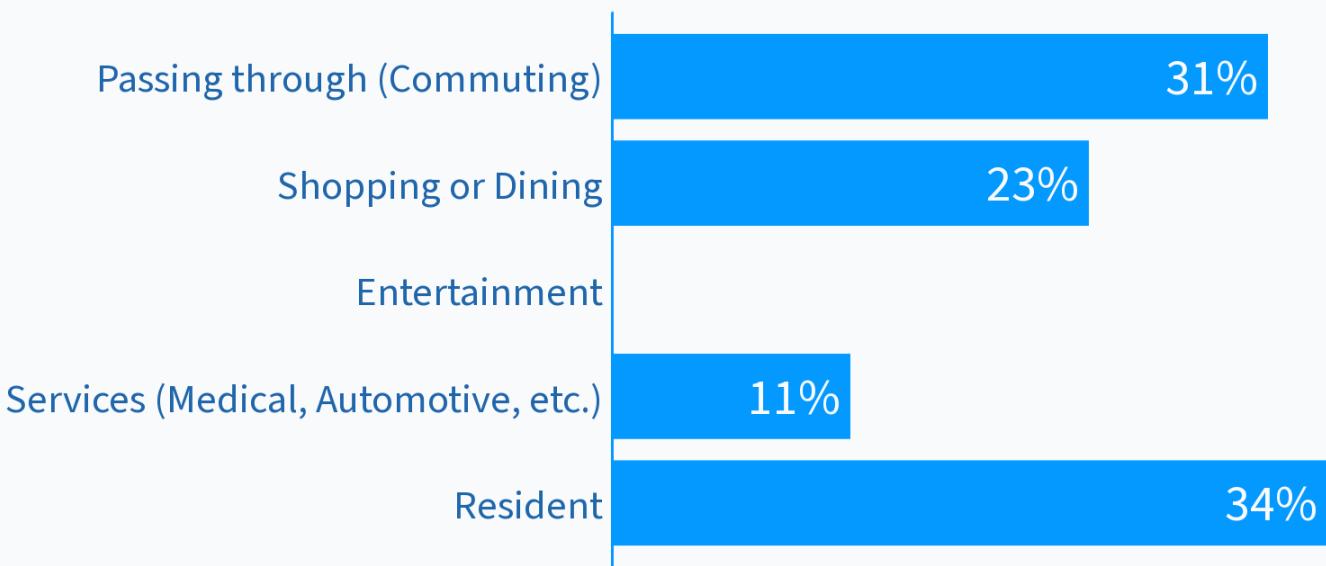
What are the current challenges for the corridor that you would like to see addressed?



The above chart shows community members responses to the question: "What are the current challenges for the Corridor that you would like to see addressed?" Traffic

stands out as the most important challenge - an issue that was made very clear by the community must be improved for any other new projects to be successful.

How do you interact with Highland Ave today?



The above chart shows community member responses to the question: "How do you interact with Highland Avenue today?" The most common response was resident at 34% of responses, and then passing through/commuting close behind at 31% of responses.

Shopping, dining, entertainment and other services make up a total of 33% of responses, which signals that in Highland Avenue's current condition it does not function as a destination for much of the community.

The feedback received during community meeting 1 revealed four key improvements the community would like to see on Highland Avenue: traffic, walkability and bike-ability, housing and general neighborhood. The level and speed of traffic is a concern for many residents, it is a safety concern and often causes backups. The existing road structure of Highland Avenue feels unsafe and unwelcoming to pedestrians and cyclists. The residents would like improvements that would allow for these mobility options to be integrated into the Corridor. The community has a desire for affordable, small scale, multi family and senior housing to be included along the Corridor. And finally, there was a general desire for the Corridor to have an enhanced sense of place, more greenspace options and have a clean and well cared for nature.

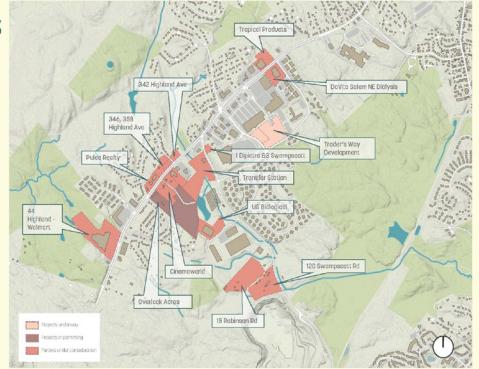
Following the community meeting, the design team analyzed comments from residents to determine the main themes of feedback. These themes informed the following steps of the process which was creating potential scenarios for the Corridor. Each scenario took great care to address the main concerns and desires of the residents.

1 TODAY (Challenges)



Highland Avenue Corridor Study | Public Meeting 1 | Wednesday October 28 2020

2 OPPORTUNITIES



Highland Avenue Corridor Study | Public Meeting 1 | Wednesday October 28 2020

3 ASPIRATIONS



Below are just a few examples, please add your own ideas / choices



Highland Avenue Corridor Study | Public Meeting 1 | Wednesday October 28 2020

MIRO BOARD ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Questions / Discussion Points

1. What are the key issues confronting the Corridor?
2. What do you think is the right character for the Corridor?
3. How can the Corridor evolve to meet Salem's future?

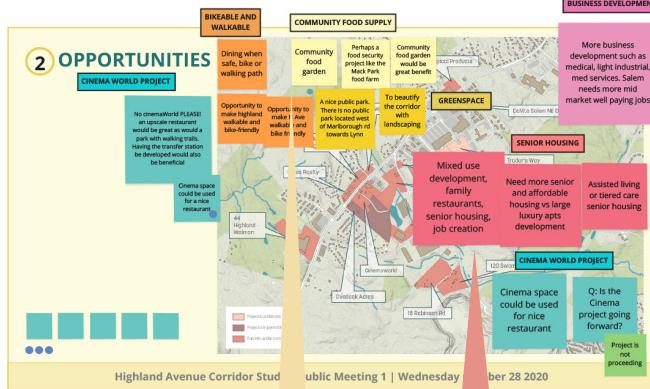
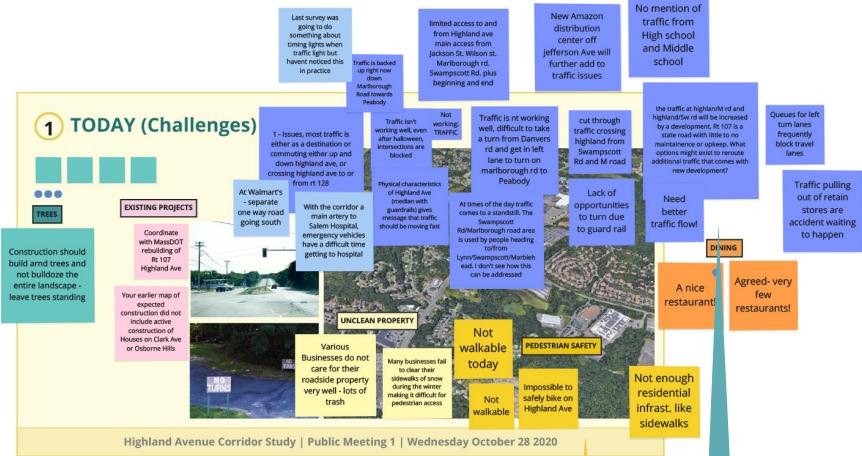
Directions

- 1 Find the Q&A Chat feature on the bottom right of your zoom window
- 2 Share any responses you have to the boards or others' comments there
- 3 Please specify which photo or comment you are responding to
- 4 Your comment will be placed on a sticky note on the board live!

Contact

If you have trouble submitting comments through the zoom Q&A, or have additional comments or questions you may email:

Amanda Chiancola, Senior Planner - City of Salem
achiancola@salem.com



“ Mixed use development, family restaurants, senior housing, job creation ”

“ Community food garden would be a great benefit ”

“ Traffic is not working well, difficult to take a turn...at times of the day traffic comes to a standstill. ”

“ Not walkable today ”

“ More greenery and places to walk ”

* Full comments can be found in the appendix

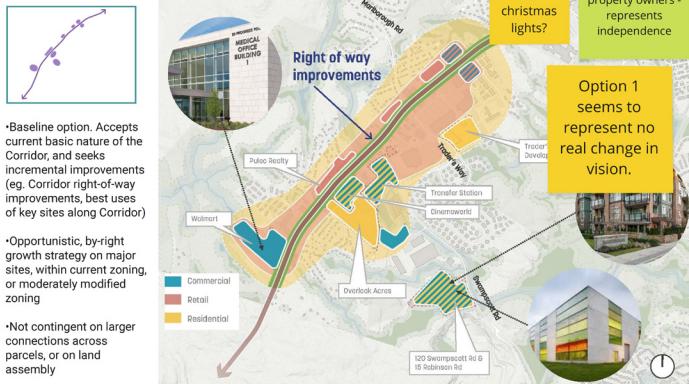
Community Meeting 2 - January 12, 2021

Community Meeting 2 gave residents of Salem an opportunity to comment on the initial scenario options developed by the design team. The gathering took place as a virtual meeting, and used some of the same technology as community meeting 1 to engage with the residents.

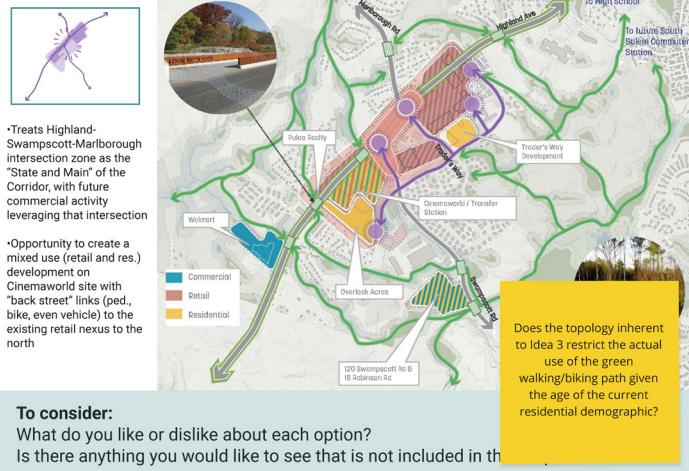
The meeting began with presentations from the design team about each of the three proposed scenarios. The

team went into depth on the key attributes, pros and cons of each scenario, as well as the commonalities between them. The participants were then asked to reflect on the three scenarios through a Miro Board; which one they liked best, which attributes they were most excited about and anything that was left out completely that they would like to see. The boards and comments are seen in the graphics below.

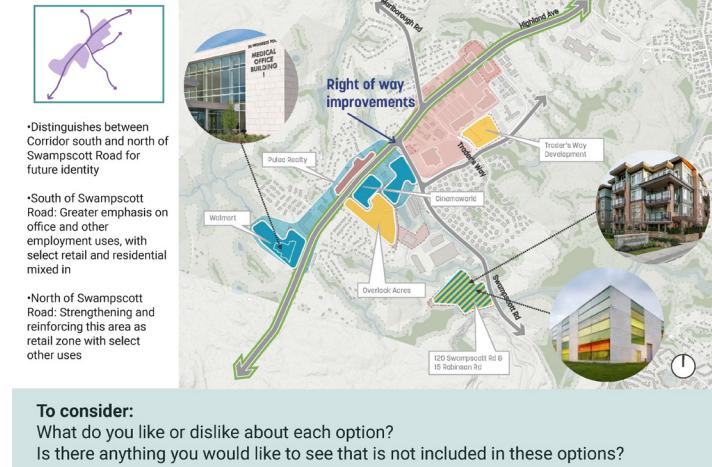
Big Picture Idea 1: "Christmas Lights"



Big Picture Idea 3: Integrated Commercial District



Big Picture Idea 2: Distinct North and South Character Zones



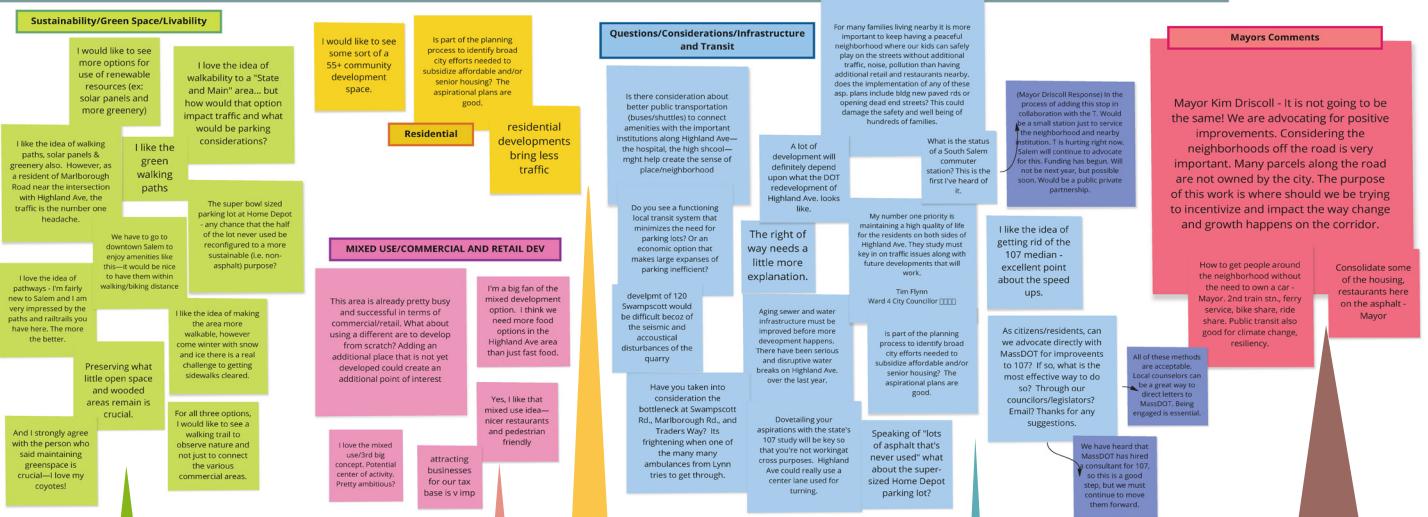
Potential Retail Zone Improvements



Five main themes of feedback emerged from this second community meeting: An interest in greenspace, trails, and sustainability overall; support for affordable and senior housing; support for a mixed use district; desire for a well functioning local transit system; and for a family friendly neighborhood feel. These themes greatly aligned with the feedback from the first meeting, and provided greater insight into the scenario that would work best for the Highland Avenue Corridor.

The feedback from community meeting 2 was synthesized and then presented to the working group for consideration. The themes developed from the meeting helped to determine which pieces of each scenario were most desirable, and should be recommended. The commonalities between all of the scenarios were aligned with the feedback received.

General Feedback



“I would like to see some sort of a 55+ community development space”

“For all options I would like to see a walking trail to observe nature and ... to connect the various commercial areas”

“I like the mixed use (area) idea - nicer restaurants and pedestrian friendly”

“Many parcels along the road are not owned by the City. The purpose of this work is (to learn) where should we be trying to incentivize and impact the way change and growth happens on the Corridor”

“Better public transportation to connect amenities with the important institutions along Highland Avenue - the hospital, the highschool - might help create a sense of place/ neighborhood”

* Full comments can be found in the appendix

5.0

Future Development Scenarios

Scenarios

Big Picture Ideas Approach and Overview

The three Big Picture Ideas were developed to draw out issues for discussion, and potentially to create a consensus vision. All three scenarios share the ability to make use of the common framework elements that were explored as part of the study. Each, however, looks at different possible outcomes for the Corridor in the future. None of these outcomes is intended to be rigid; it is expected that certain aspects of a given scenario may be adapted alongside aspects of other scenarios, and that some but not all of the framework elements may be implemented. The result would then be a wholly new scenario.

Some key features of the Big Picture Ideas are:

They are intended to be broad brushstrokes – the consultant team is not suggesting mandated relocation of existing uses to achieve a vision;

Existing conditions (business uses, topography, etc.) are an important factor;

Private land ownership is a factor – Options can provide guidance for future development based on a vision for the Corridor;

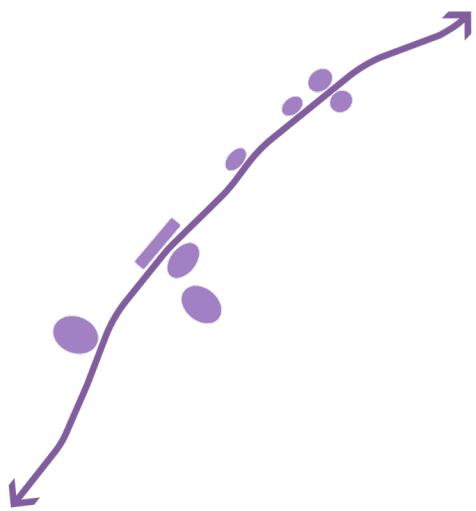
Options are meant as catalyst for discussion, drawing out issues and possible solutions

Ideas from one option may be applicable to others, with a different consensus option emerging

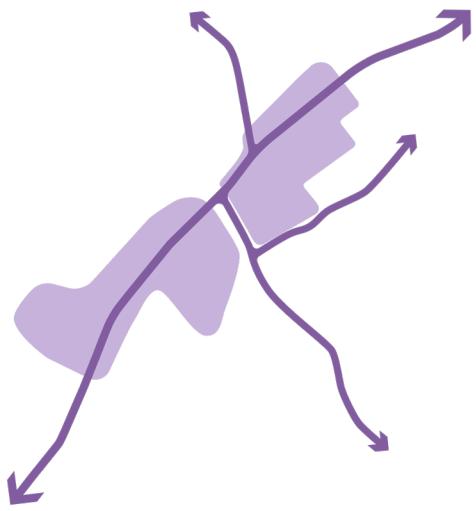
The scenarios range from least (Big Picture Idea 1) to most (Big Picture Idea 2) aspirational, in terms of the amount of coordinated effort that would be required to achieve the vision described in each. In Idea 1, very little or no coordinated action is required between parcel holders in the baseline scenario (coordinated action would, however, be required to implement the lifestyle center retrofit to the big box store zone if that framework element were included). For Idea 3, a considerable amount of coordinated action and even amalgamation of parcels may be required to achieve the vision.

There are similarities and overlaps between the scenarios due to the mature nature of the Corridor; there is limited scope overall - at least in the short to

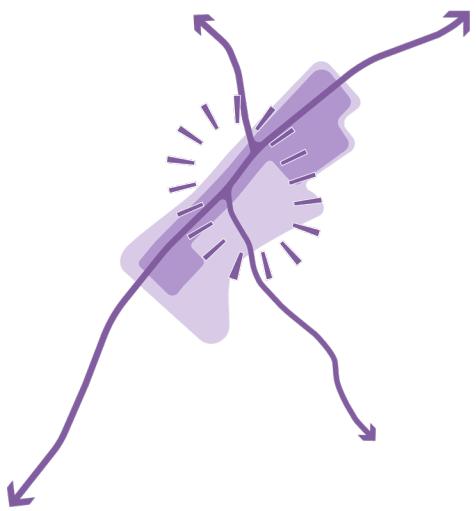
medium term - for radical alteration of roadway pattern, and possibly not even for consolidation of parcels to create larger parcels that would be available to create new mixed-use development within the Corridor (example: retail below residential with walkable internal streets). However, if a vision is established, and it gains stakeholder support, that vision can be something the City and community work towards over the medium to long term.



Big Picture Idea 1:
Christmas Lights



Big Picture Idea 2 :
North and South
Character Zones



Big Picture Idea 3:
Integrated Commercial
District

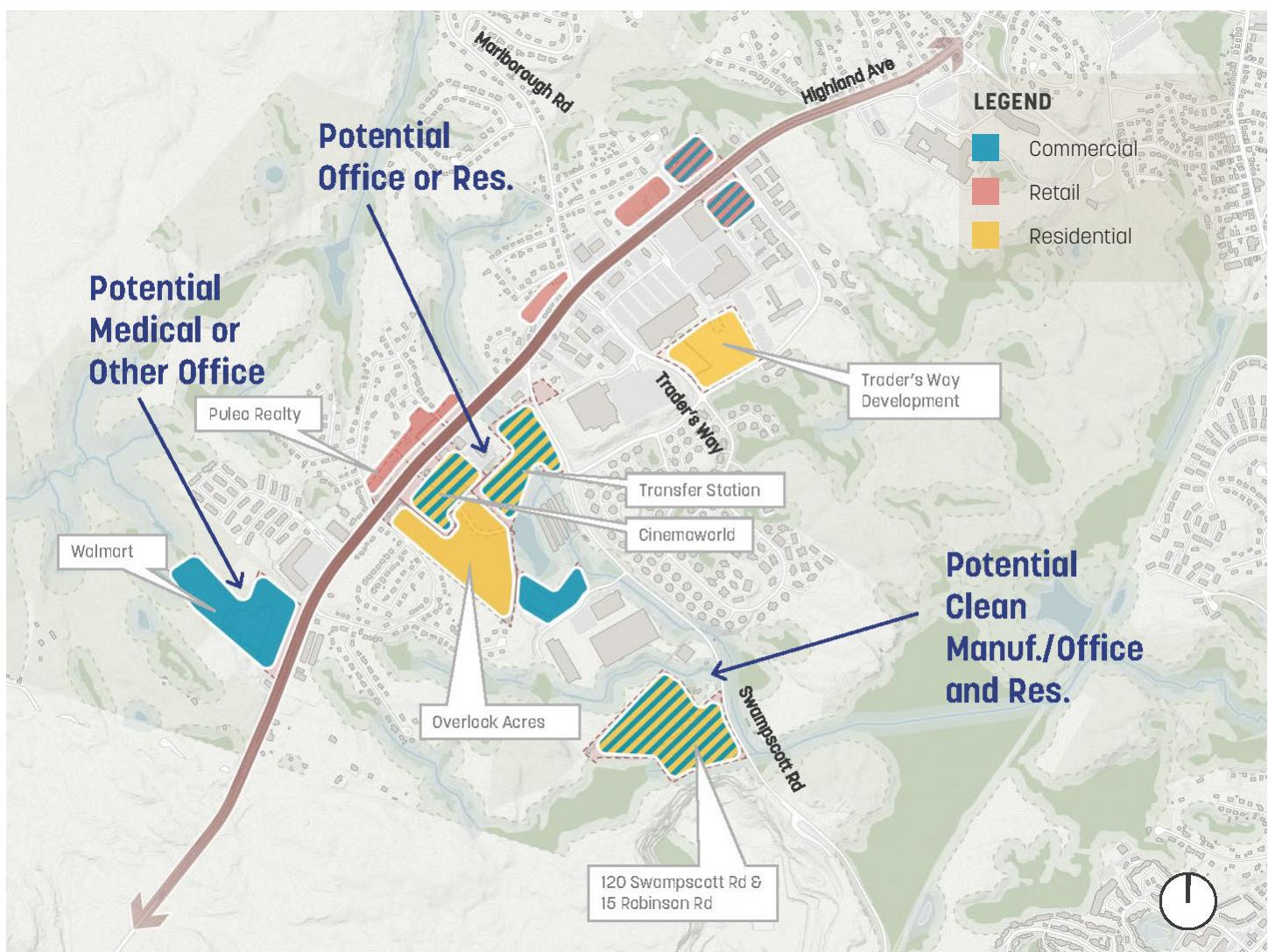
Big Picture Idea 1

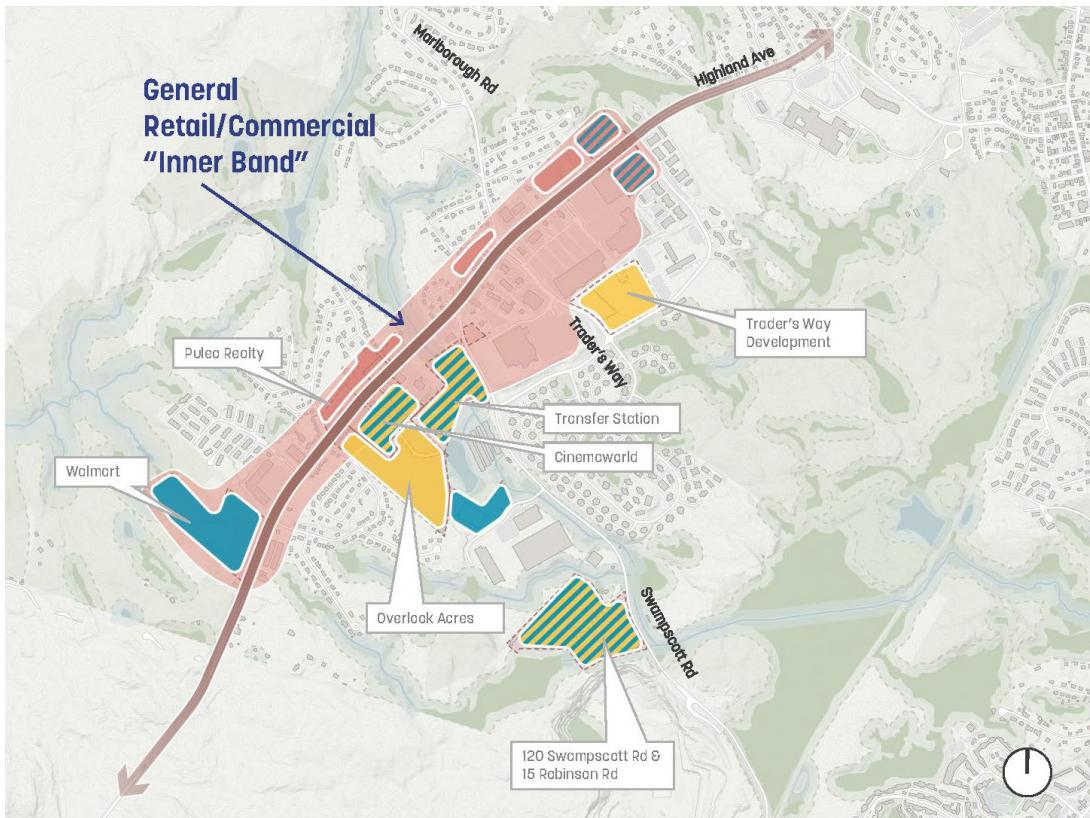
“Christmas Lights”

This scenario was lightheartedly named “Christmas Lights” due to its appearance as a string of “lights” (available development parcels), each connected to the electric “string” (Highland Avenue). This scenario assumes that parcel boundaries generally remain as they are today, and that changes in the Corridor occur much as they have been occurring, through mostly isolated action by individual land owners. This scenario could be made more aspirational by the inclusion of any or all of the Common Framework Elements.

Features of Big Picture Idea 1 are:

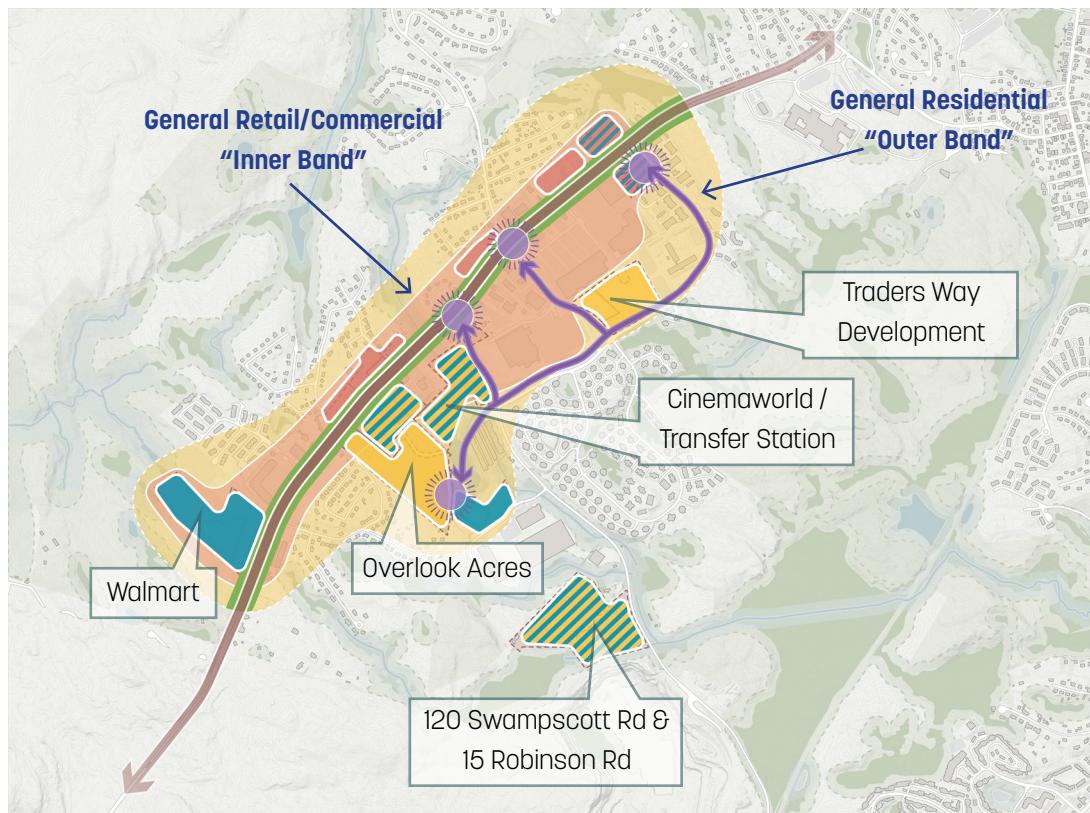
- It is the baseline option; it accepts current basic nature of the Corridor, and seeks incremental improvements (eg. Corridor right-of-way improvements, best uses of key sites along Corridor);
- It suggests an opportunistic, by-right growth strategy on major sites, within current zoning, or moderately modified zoning;
- It is not contingent on larger connections across parcels, or on land assembly.





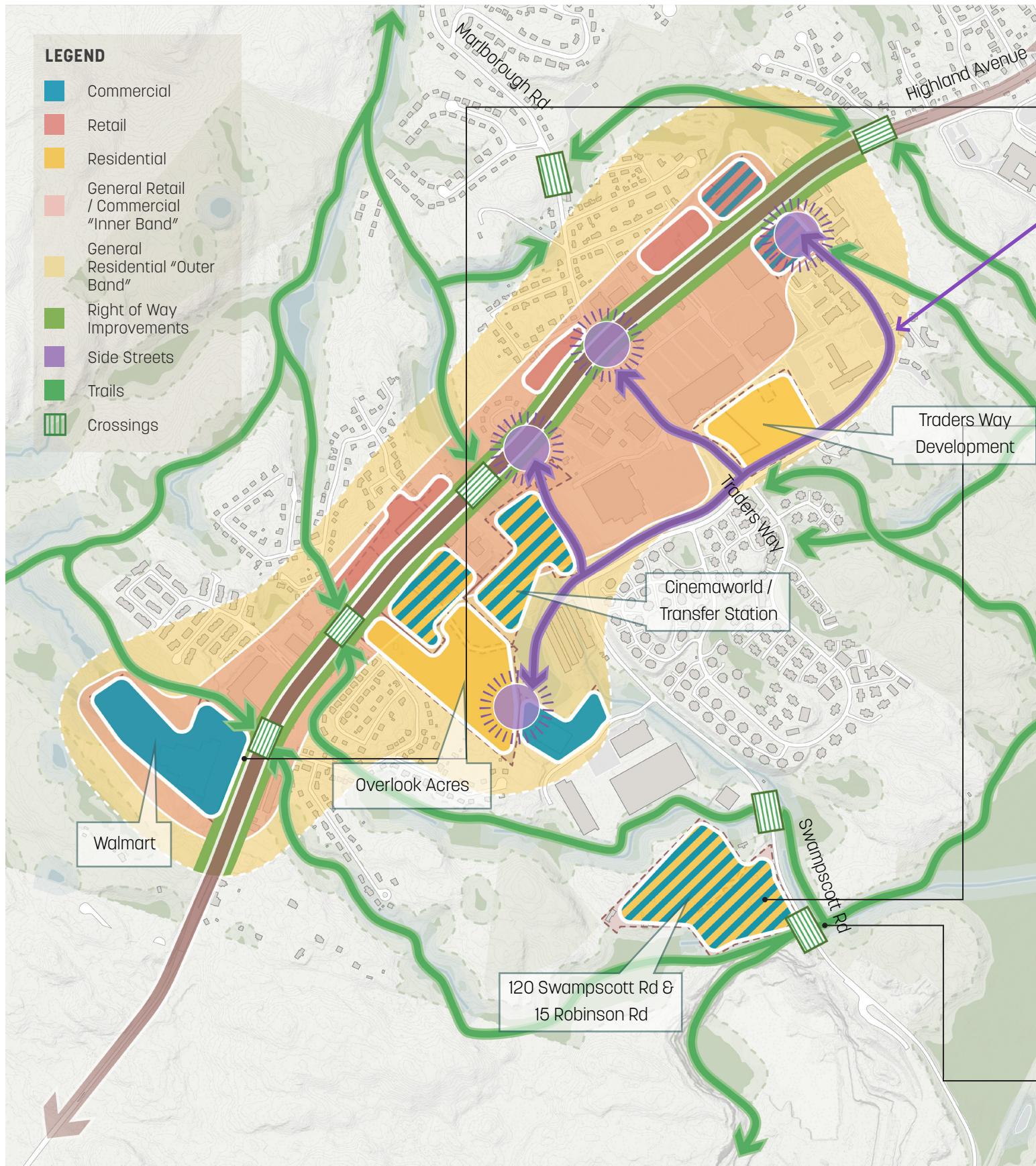
Big Idea 1 - Build 2

This scenario establishes an inner band of retail space that hugs Highland Avenue on both sides. Commercial, retail and residential spaces are added along the Corridor.



Big Idea 1 - Build 3

Big Picture Idea 1



Big Idea 1: Christmas Lights



Public Facing Office Building

Public facing offices and services are proposed along the Corridor in the inner retail zone.



Apartments / Condos

Residential apartments and condos are proposed as the key features of the outer residential zone.



Nature Trails

Connections to new and existing nature trails are proposed along Highland Avenue to provide pedestrian connections to the retail zone, and across Highland Avenue .



Office Building

Private office buildings are proposed to be located in the surrounding area, but not in the primary retail zone along the Corridor.

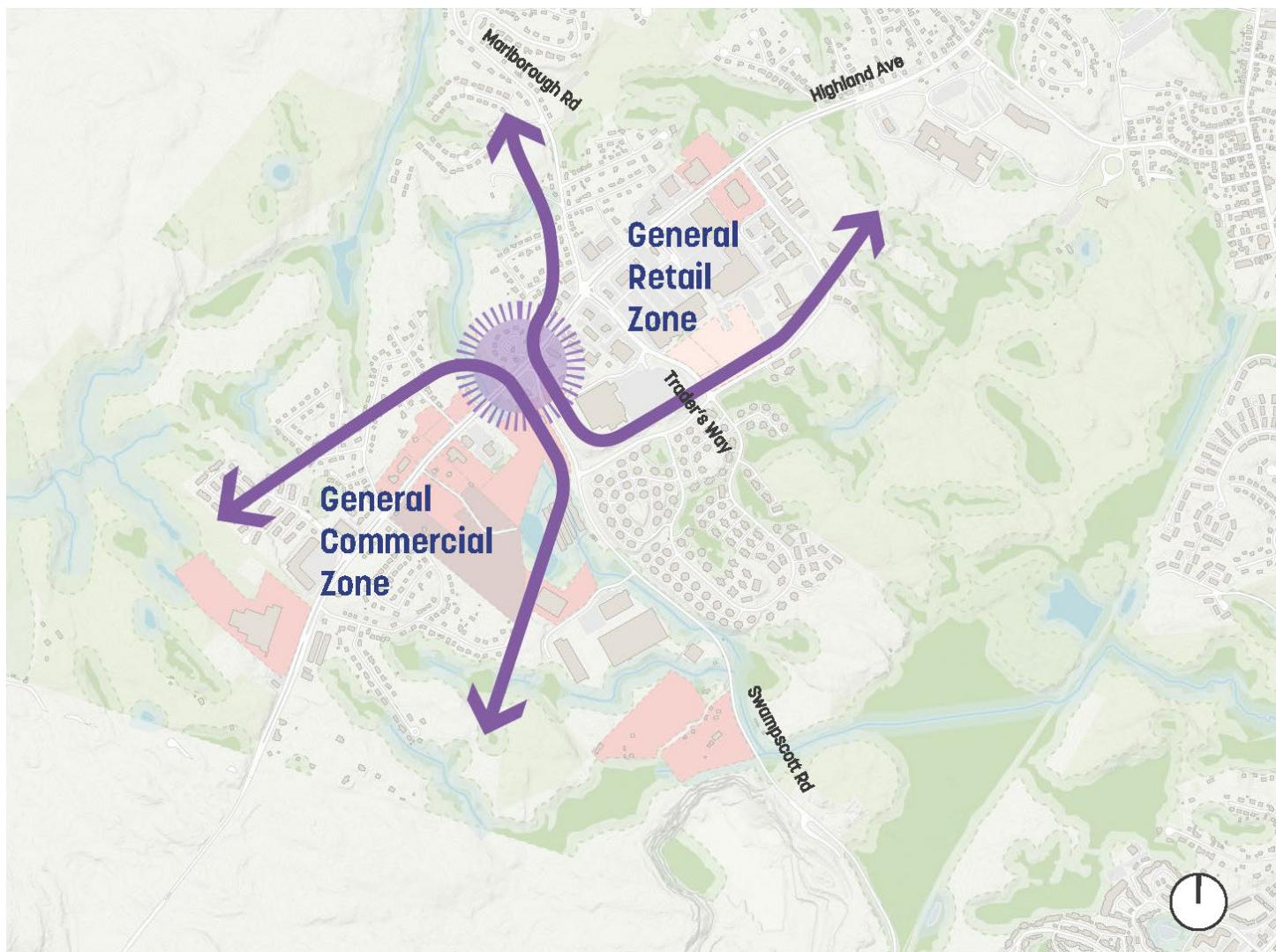
Big Picture Idea 2

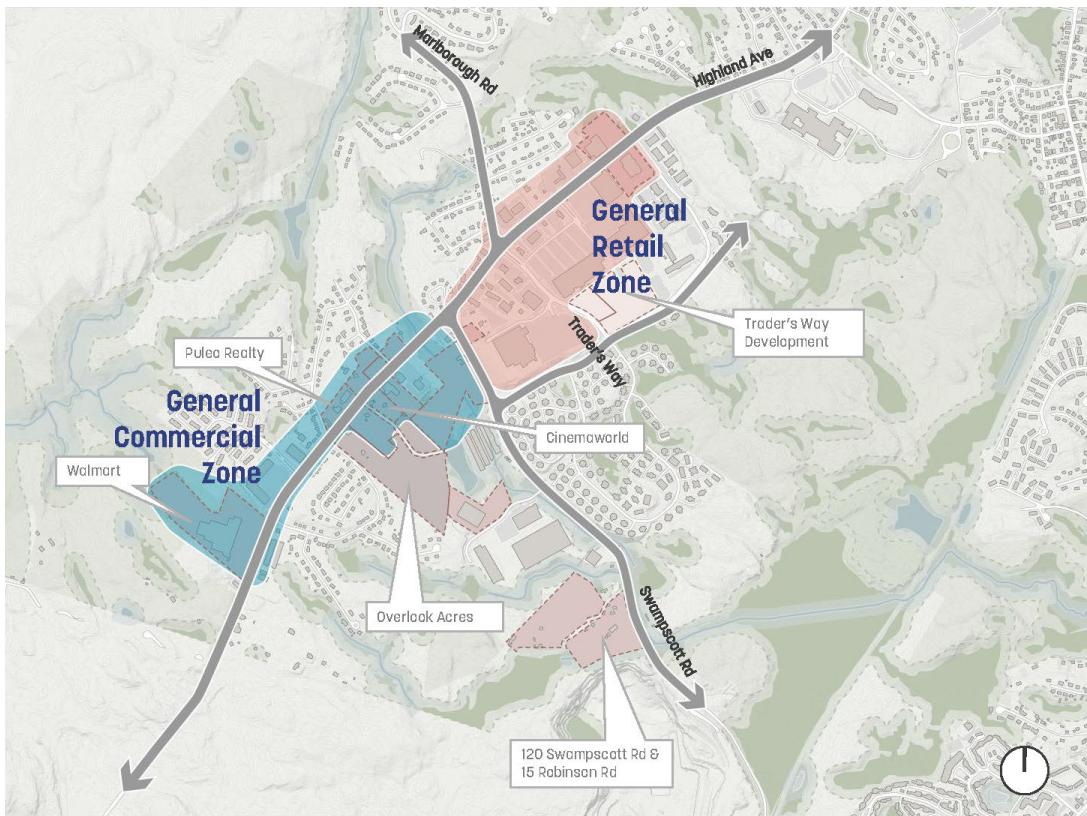
Distinct North and South Character Zones

This scenario identifies and builds upon distinct characteristics of the Corridor to the north and the south of the Swampscott Road intersection with Highland Avenue. This scenario is more aspirational than Idea 1, as it posits a gradual transformation of the southern part of the Corridor into a zone of increased office presence, while transforming the existing big box store zone in the northern part of the Corridor into more of a lifestyle center (still anchored by the big box stores).

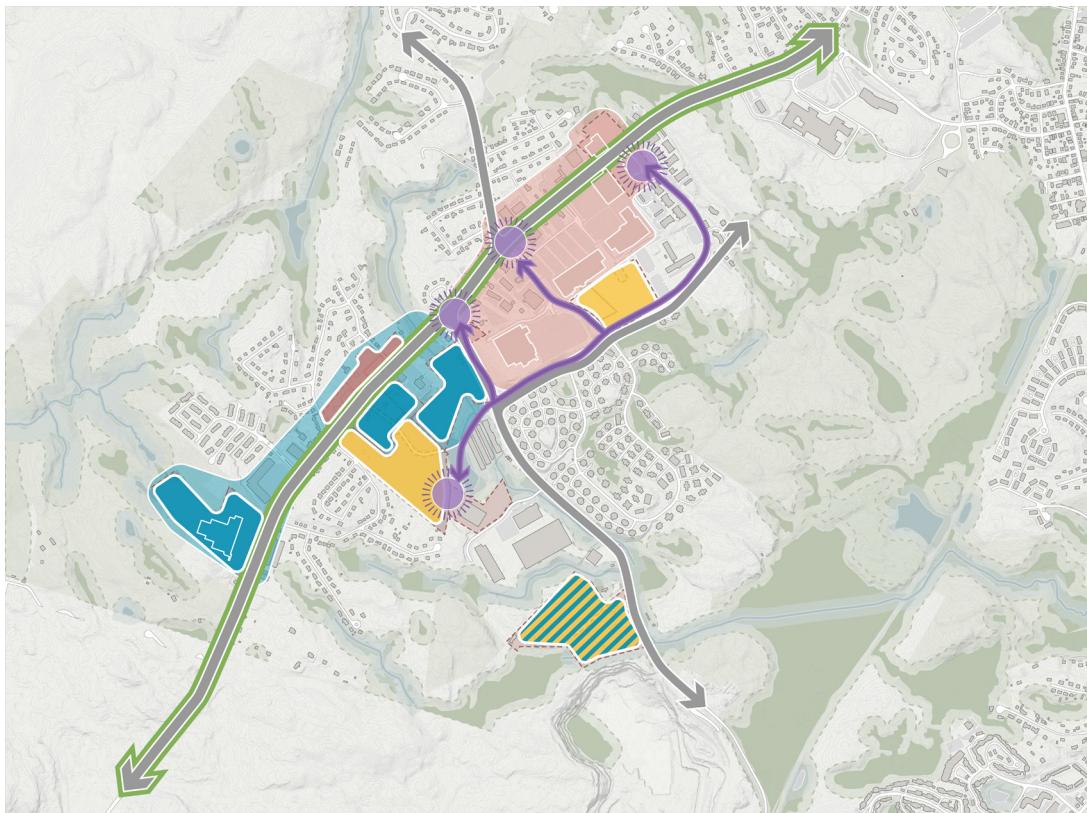
Features of Big Picture Idea 2 are:

- It generally distinguishes between Corridor south and north of Swampscott Road for future identity;
- South of Swampscott Road: Greater emphasis on office and other employment uses, with select retail and residential mixed in
- North of Swampscott Road: Strengthening and reinforcing this area as the retail zone with select other uses.



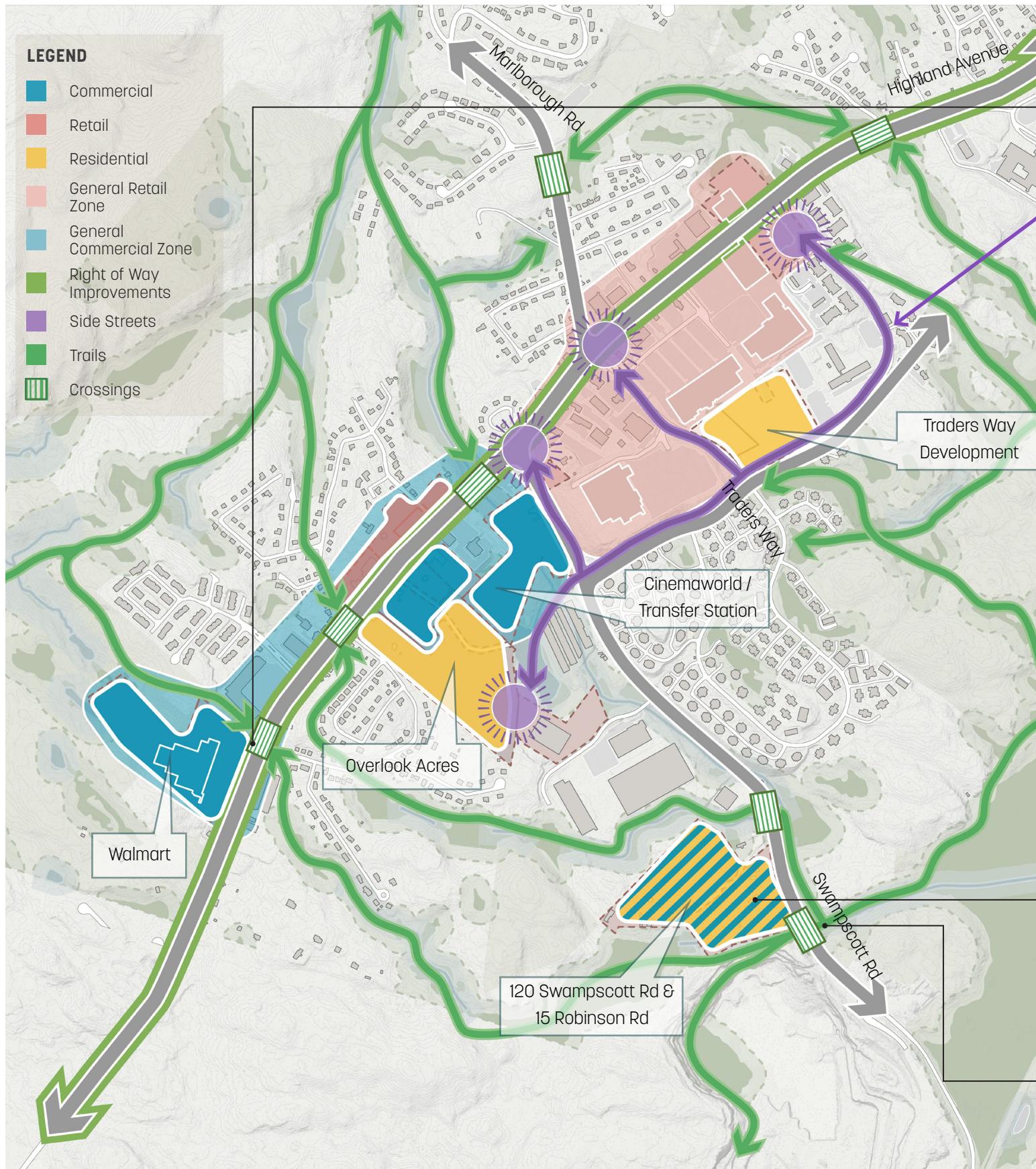


Big Idea 2 - Build 2



Big Idea 2 - Build 3

Big Picture Idea 2



Big Idea 2: North and South Character Zones



Public Facing Office Building

Public facing office buildings are proposed within the general commercial zone on the Corridor.



Apartments / Condos

New residential spaces are proposed in both the commercial and retail zones along Highland Avenue.



Nature Trails

Connections to new and existing nature trails are proposed along Highland Avenue to provide pedestrian connections to the retail and commercial zones, and across Highland Avenue.



Office Building

Private office buildings are proposed to be located in the surrounding area, but not in the primary zones along the Corridor.

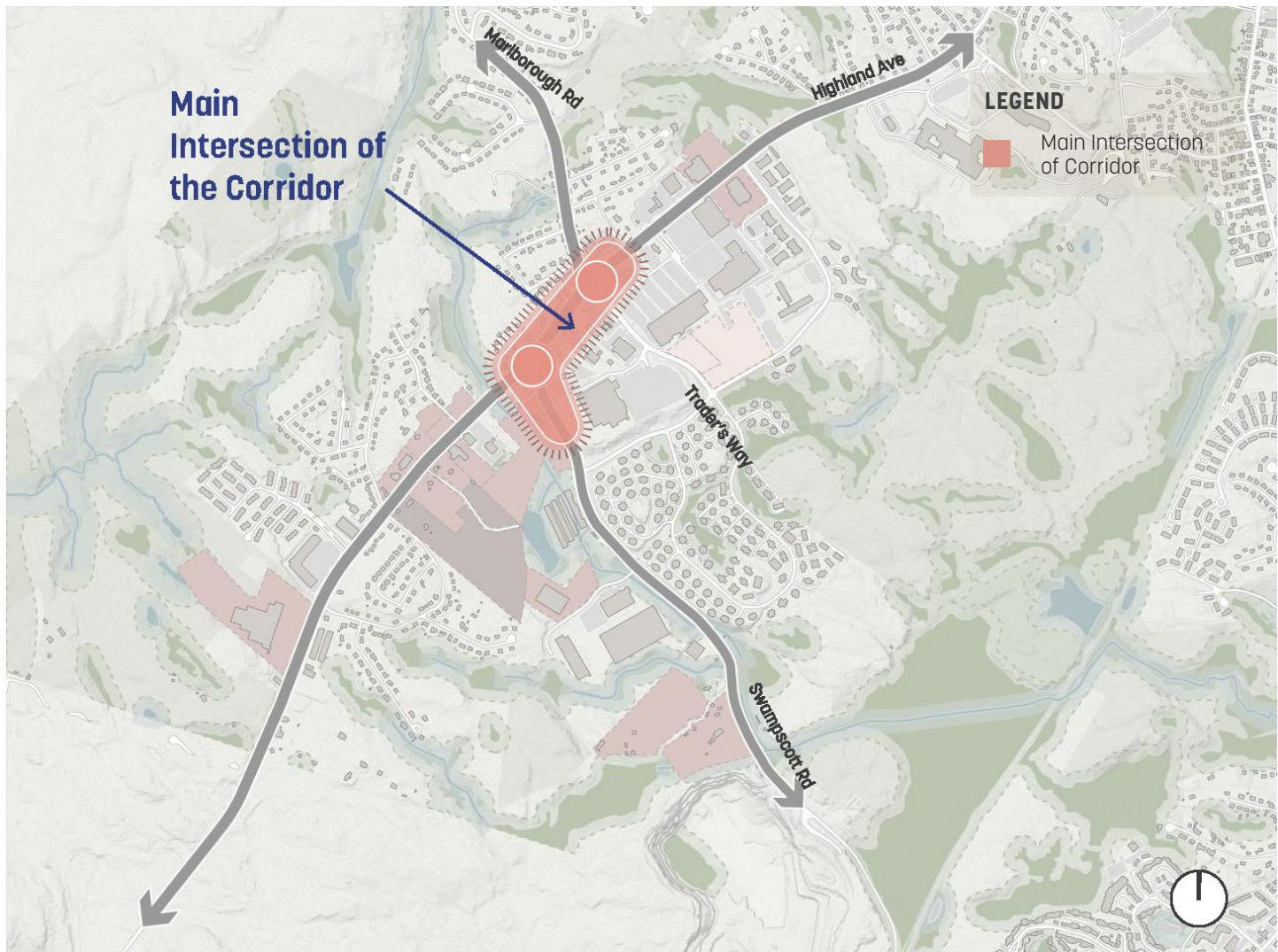
Big Picture Idea 3

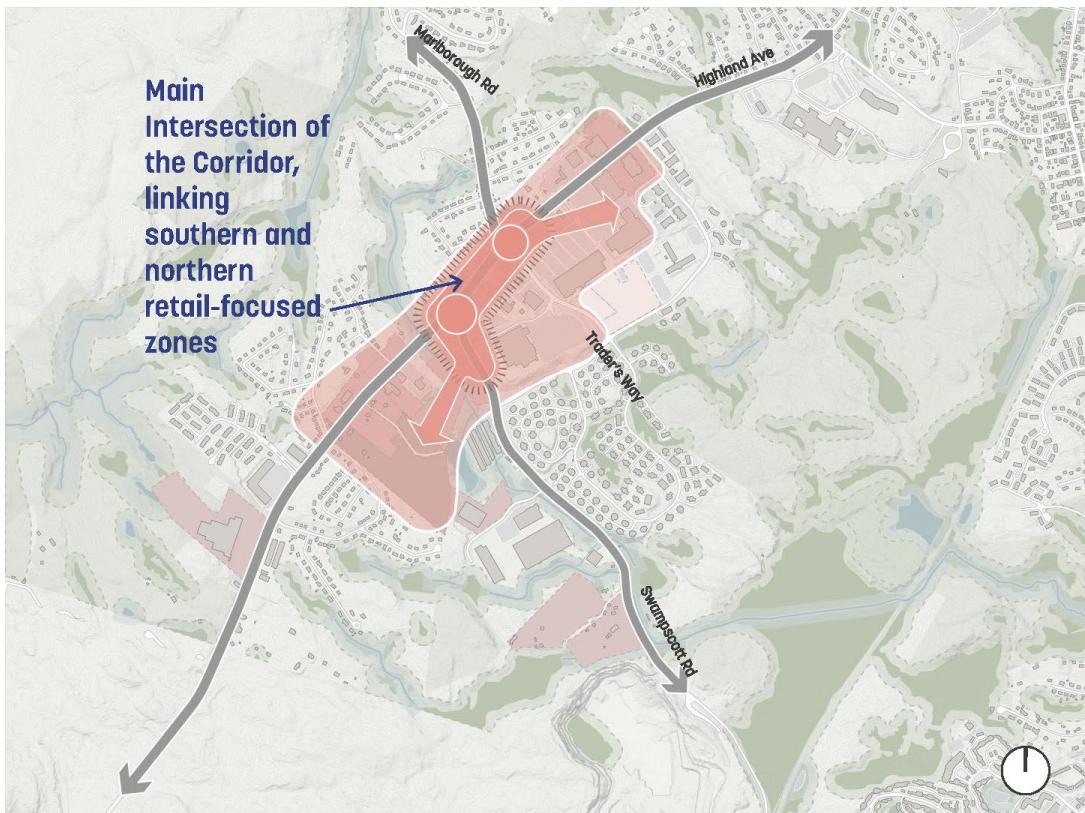
Integrated Commercial District

The most ambitious of the three scenarios, Big Picture Idea 3 identifies the Highland-Marlborough-Swampscott intersection as the main intersection of this entire part of Salem, and suggests that the intersection's existence alone can catalyze dramatic change radiating out from it. This vision offers the opportunity for property owners adjacent to this super-intersection to conceive of their parcels as potentially having different, possibly denser uses in the future, and, importantly, uses that are connected strongly to adjacent uses via pedestrian and bicycle pathways.

Features of Big Picture Idea 3 are:

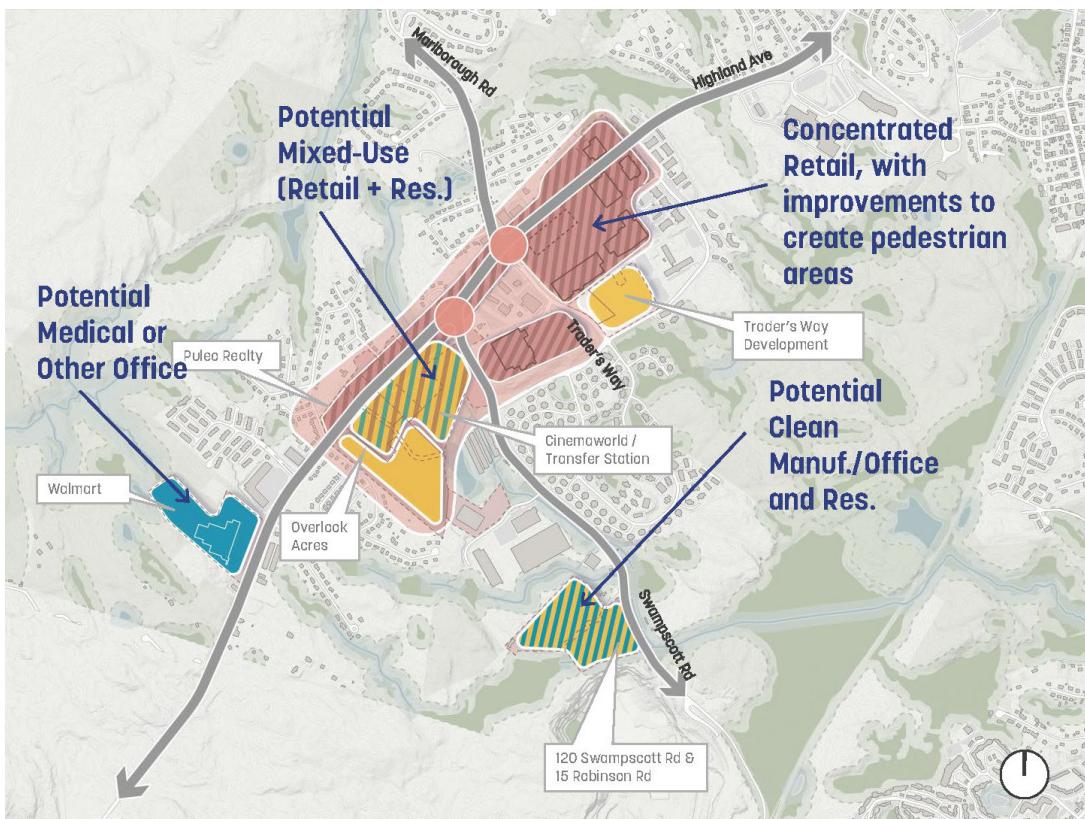
- It treats Highland-Swampscott-Marlborough intersection zone as the “State and Main” of the Corridor, with future commercial activity leveraging that intersection
- It creates an opportunity to create a mixed use (retail and residential) development on the Cinemaworld and/or Transfer Station sites, with “back street” links (pedestrian, bicycle, and - subject to detailed analysis - even vehicle) to the existing retail nexus to the north; this would allow for a high degree of connectivity that is not dependent on Highland Avenue.





Big Idea 3 - Build 2

Big picture idea 3 centers on proposing a main intersection at the center of the Corridor, surrounded by a retail zone.

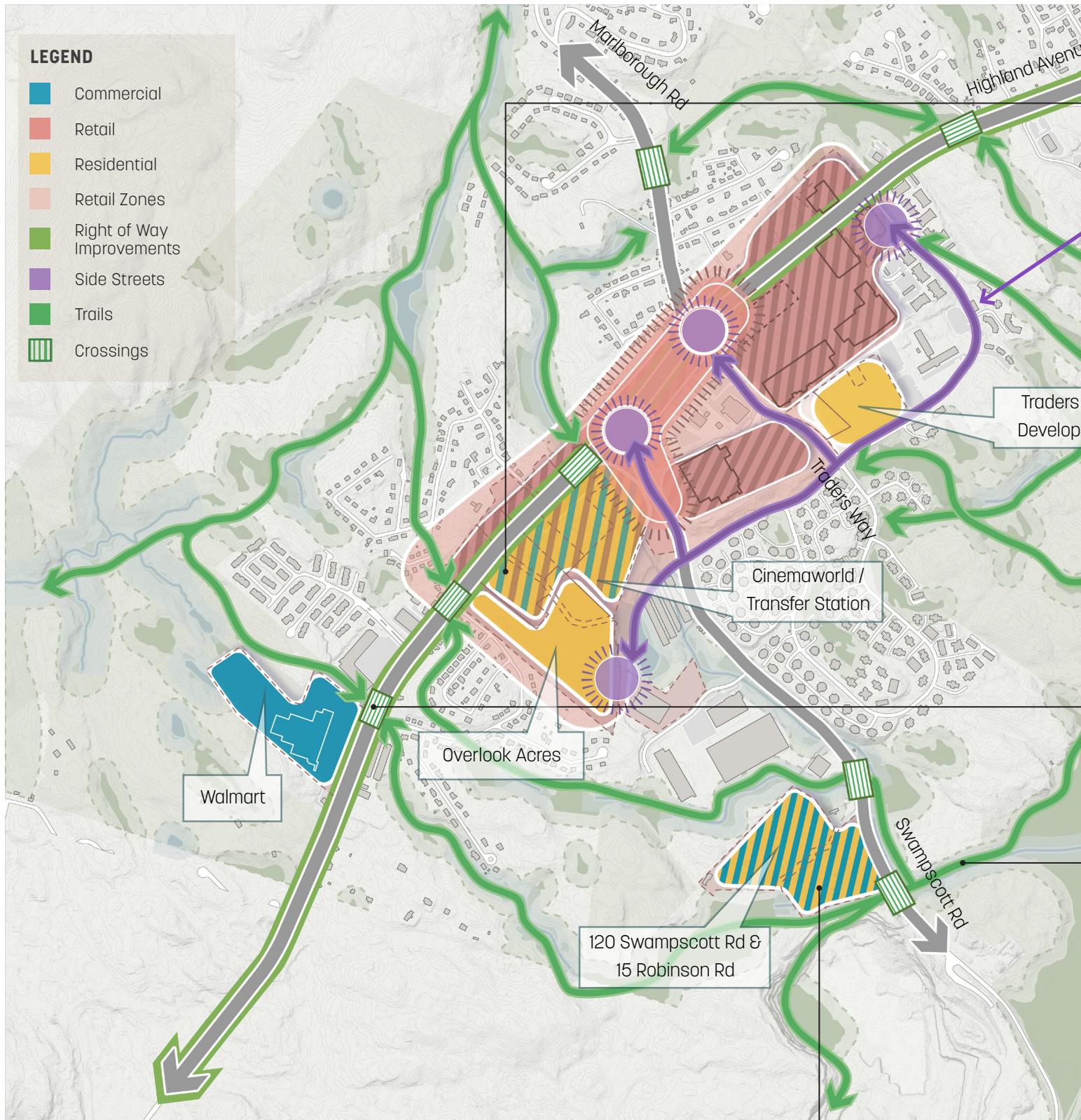


Big Idea 3 - Build 3

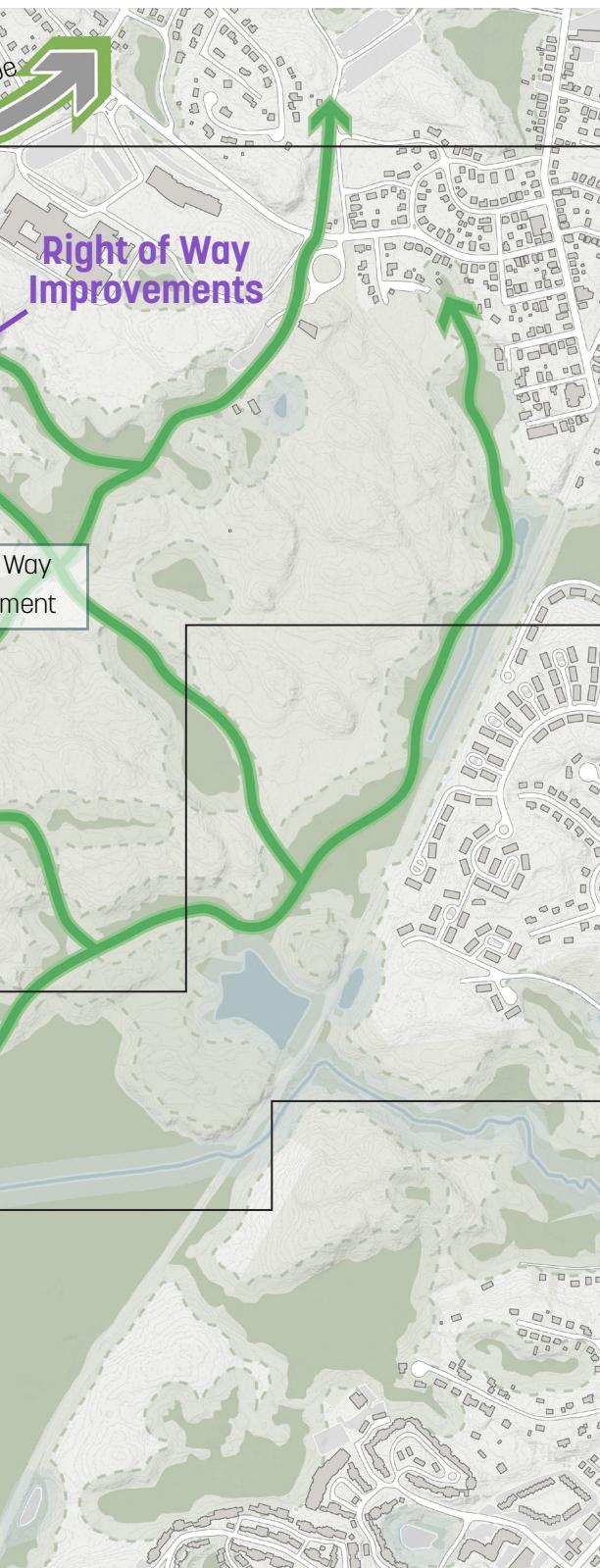
Both retail and residential developments are proposed within core retail zone, as well as some commercial space within a mixed use development. Commercial offices would be located outside of the retail zone.



Big Picture Idea 3



Big Idea 3 - Integrated Commercial District



Apartment / Condos

Residential developments are proposed in the core mixed use district, within the retail zone, and in the surrounding area just outside of the retail zone.



Bike Paths

Bike paths are proposed along Highland Avenue and on trails that would connect to Highland Avenue in the crossing zones.



Nature Trails

Connections to new and existing nature trails are proposed along Highland Avenue to provide pedestrian connections to the retail zone, and across Highland Avenue .



Office Building

Private office buildings are proposed to be located in the surrounding area, but not in the primary retail zone along the Corridor.

6.0

Common Framework Elements

Overview

Common Framework Elements: Transformation For The Future

Following the analysis and market scan phases of the study, the team focused on creating a framework that can be used to guide future thinking and development along the Corridor. Given that the basic nature of the Corridor is already determined as a result of roadway alignments, parcelization, and established uses on many sites, the framework is by its nature restricted to improving what already exists. This notwithstanding, some major ideas emerged in the course of the creation of the framework, and these were determined (by the conclusion of the study) to be applicable to all “Big Picture Idea” scenarios that were developed.

Fundamental to the development of a framework is the incorporation of feedback received from stakeholders at community and Working Group meetings. This includes the following:

Increased Walkability/bike-ability: There is a strong desire to be able to move around the area by means other than an automobile, and to do so in a pleasant manner;

Calmer: The Corridor is a commuting corridor and a regional attractor (big box stores), which is a challenge for achieving this goal. Also, many of the impacts on a study area-wide level that affect the perception of “calm” are related to the MassDOT R.O.W. and how that is altered going forwards. Because this element is controlled by a state agency, it is not in purview of this study. The study nevertheless makes strong suggestions about how the R.O.W. could be improved;

Greener: Again, as with “Calmer”, much of the ability to impact at least the perception of increased green-ness (in the form of street trees) resides within the MassDOT R.O.W. The framework does make suggestions, however, about connecting within the Corridor through a “green network” of trails;

More Housing: There is a strong desire for broad-spectrum housing, including senior housing;

Common Elements

The elements that stay the same throughout all three Big Picture Ideas are:

Retail Nexus Enhancement



Improved Connectivity



Right of Way Improvements





Potential exists for the evolution of the retail nexus at the northern end of the Corridor into more of a “lifestyle center” anchored by big box retail, where people can connect to the nexus itself, and within it, on foot, and can spend time in pleasant outdoor spaces.



Identifying future potential crossing points for pedestrians along Highland Avenue, as well as creating alternate means (pedestrian and bicycle routes) to access those crossing points.



Engaging with MassDOT to create the best possible future for the Highland Avenue right-of-way, with additional turning opportunities, safe bicycle lanes, etc. Equally, creation of bicycle lanes on secondary roads will be beneficial.

Enhanced Sense of Neighborhood: This item is supported strongly by the above four, but goes beyond being merely the sum of those items. It is a desire to have full-spectrum services and amenities within the Corridor to create a sense of a complete neighborhood.

The key framework elements that can be common to any future development scenario, were developed to incorporate and support the above goals. These are:

Transform The Big Box Retail Zone

Reduce the amount of open asphalted lot visible to Highland Avenue

Create an “outer line” of programmed built space (between Highland Avenue and the parking area) to create a lively, aesthetically pleasing street edge to Highland Avenue

Create open spaces and protected walkways/bikeways that connect elements of this shopping nexus with one another, and with residential areas surrounding

The above steps describe the creation of a “mini lifestyle center”. These transformations of existing “big box” retail clusters are becoming increasingly common throughout the United States. This is projected to increase post-Covid (as these retail areas have weathered the pandemic financially much better than other types of retail, and because there will be increased demand for lifestyle retail that is local to where people live). Within the metro Boston area, a successful example of this is The Street, along Route 9 in Chestnut Hill, where office space has been constructed over street-edge retail that is surrounded by outdoor amenity spaces (seating areas, play areas, etc.)



Establish a Secondary Access Network

Leverage existing secondary roads to the east of Highland Avenue - Swampscott Road, Traders Way, 1st Street

Consider signalizing the intersection of 1st Street and Highland Avenue (in conjunction with removal of the center barrier on Highland; to facilitate left turns)



Examine the possibility of extending 1st Street southwards towards the Transfer Station and “Cinemaworld” sites (if not as a vehicular way, then as a pedestrian/bicycle route)

The above steps will create an opportunity for local residents east of Highland Avenue to make better connections to both Highland Avenue itself, and to the retail center at the northern end of the Corridor. These connections will further serve to de-pressure Highland Avenue (ie. Potentially reduce traffic on Highland).



Create a Connected Trail Network

Utilize existing wooded areas, whether on private or public land, to create trails that connect various areas within the Corridor;

Connect the trails across Highland Avenue (at appropriate crossing points) to create an increased sense of connectivity between residents and businesses on the east and west sides of the Corridor.

This initiative would enable pedestrians and cyclists to make connections to key places within the Corridor without having to engage with Highland Avenue (while the hope is that MassDOT will improve pedestrian and bicycle accommodations on Highland Avenue when the roadway is re-done, it is still a busy thoroughfare; other connections will facilitate the creation of greater “calm” that was called for by community members in community meetings).



Influence and Leverage Improvements to The MassDOT Right-of-Way

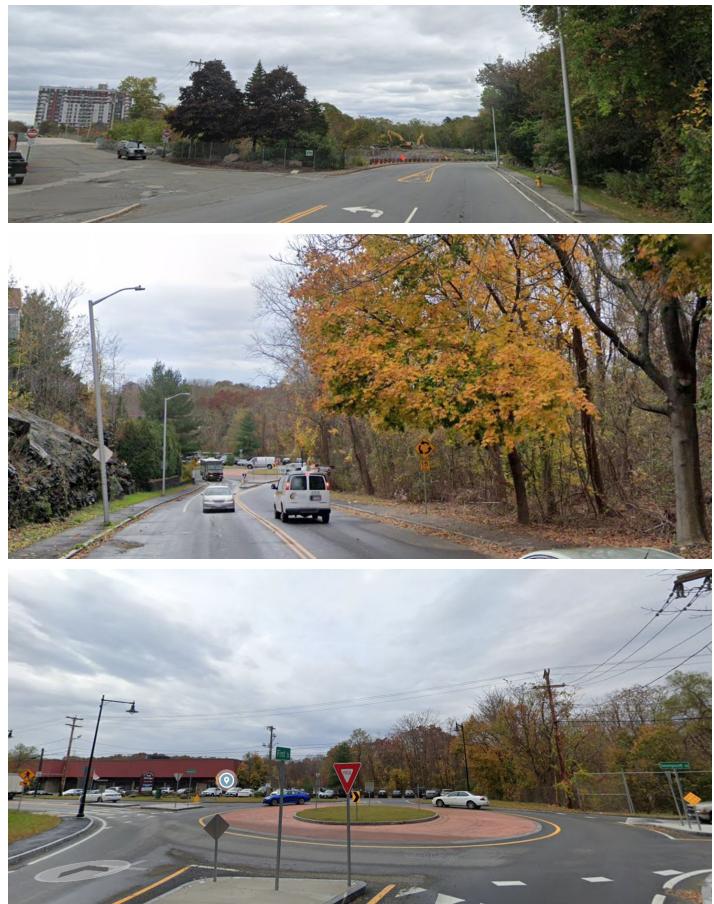
While changes to the MassDOT right-of-way are not within the purview of this study, it is such a central feature and factor in any plans for the future, that the City and community must be prepared to engage with MassDOT to influence its future. There are numerous ways to achieve this, from contacting one's local representatives, to writing to MassDOT directly, to staying involved with the consultative process as MassDOT begins to advance projects.



Secondary Road Connection Network

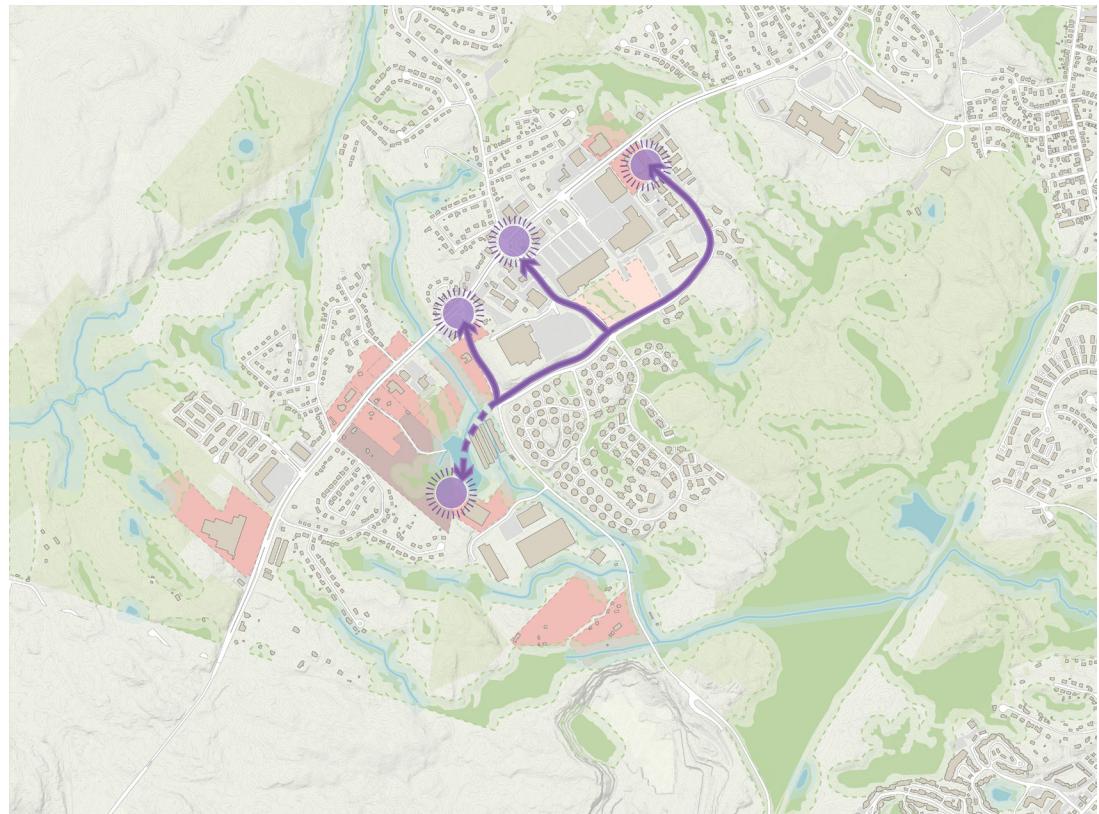
One of the key understandings gained during the study period was that Highland Avenue receives so much vehicular pressure because there are so few secondary networks surrounding it. The enhancement and accentuation of roads that do exist would support the goal of de-pressureing Highland Avenue, and would provide users with alternative ways of connecting to elements within the Corridor.

Further study is required to assess the ways in which the existing secondary road network can function in additional roles (eg. potential for bicycle lanes, or potential for connectivity to sites identified for future development).



LEGEND

 Side Streets



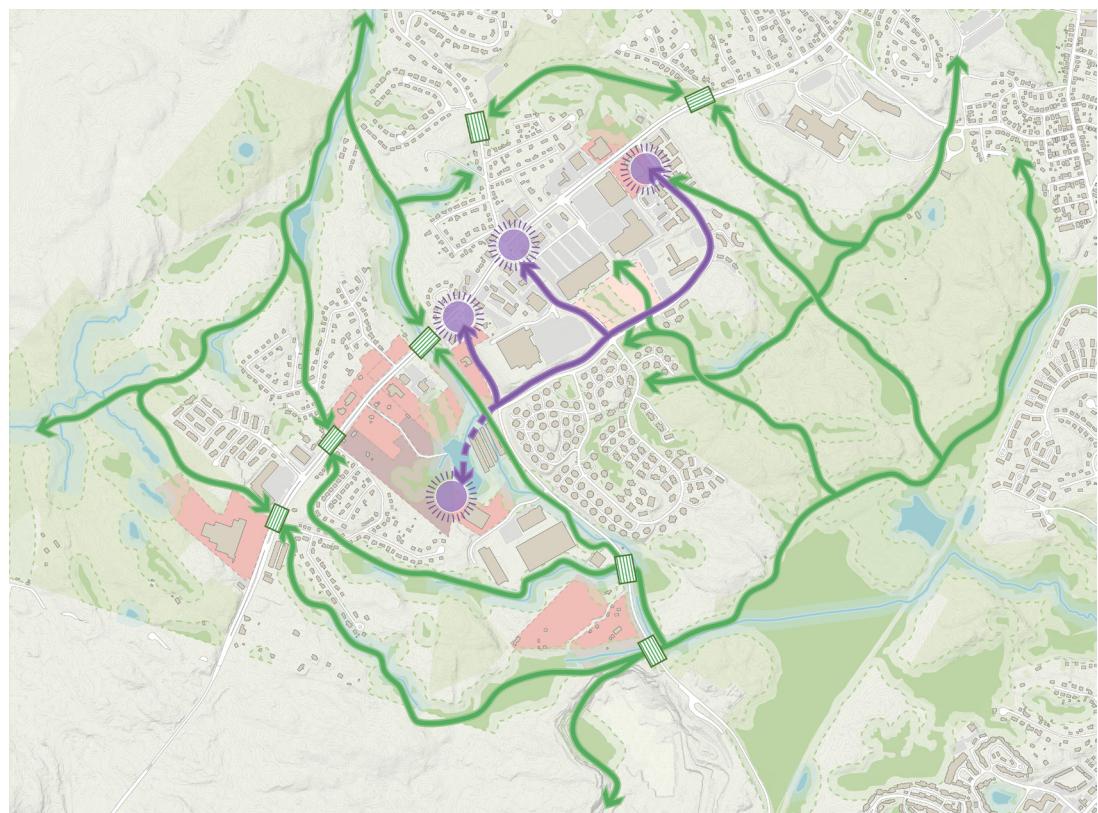
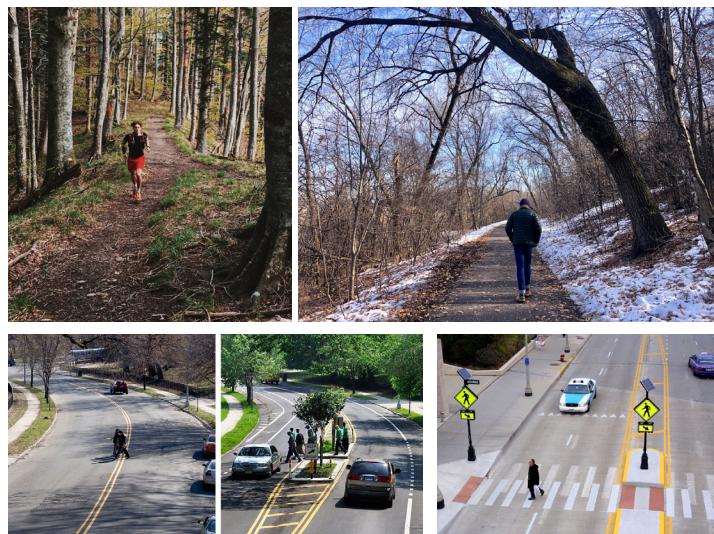
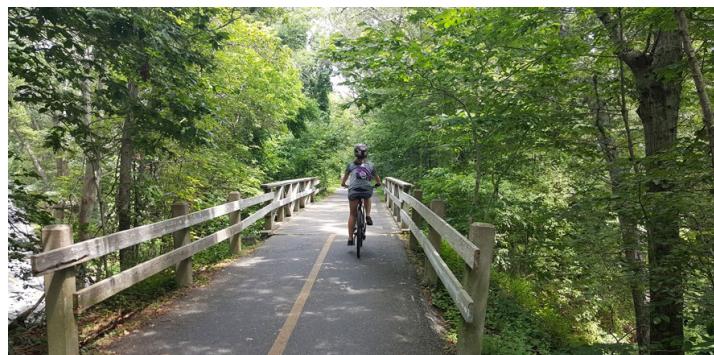
Secondary Road Network (Existing network with potential additional connectivity)

Trail Network and Highland Avenue Crossings

The large amount of wooded land surrounding the Corridor offers the potential to consider connections for pedestrians and cyclists along trails that could cross Highland Avenue at select points. The purpose of these trails, as with the “Secondary Road Connection Network,” is to provide people with additional options for getting from place to place within the Corridor without having to move along Highland Avenue itself.

Note:

Potential trails shown on the accompanying diagram are indicative only, and are not intended to represent an actual, proposed network of trails. A goal should be to eventually identify a limited number of trails that are practical to implement and that connect important elements.



Potential Trails on other wetland and constraints land

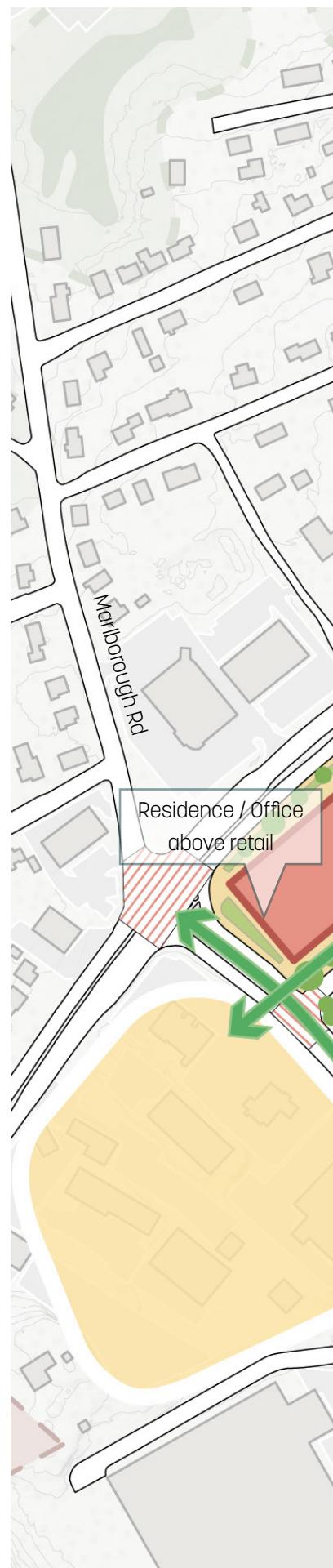
Big Box Retail Zone

The size and composition of the retail nexus at the northern end of the Corridor makes it a good candidate for an “overlay” of other uses. This would serve the purpose of providing this part of the Corridor with a great sense of place, through a combination of indoor and outdoor program elements.

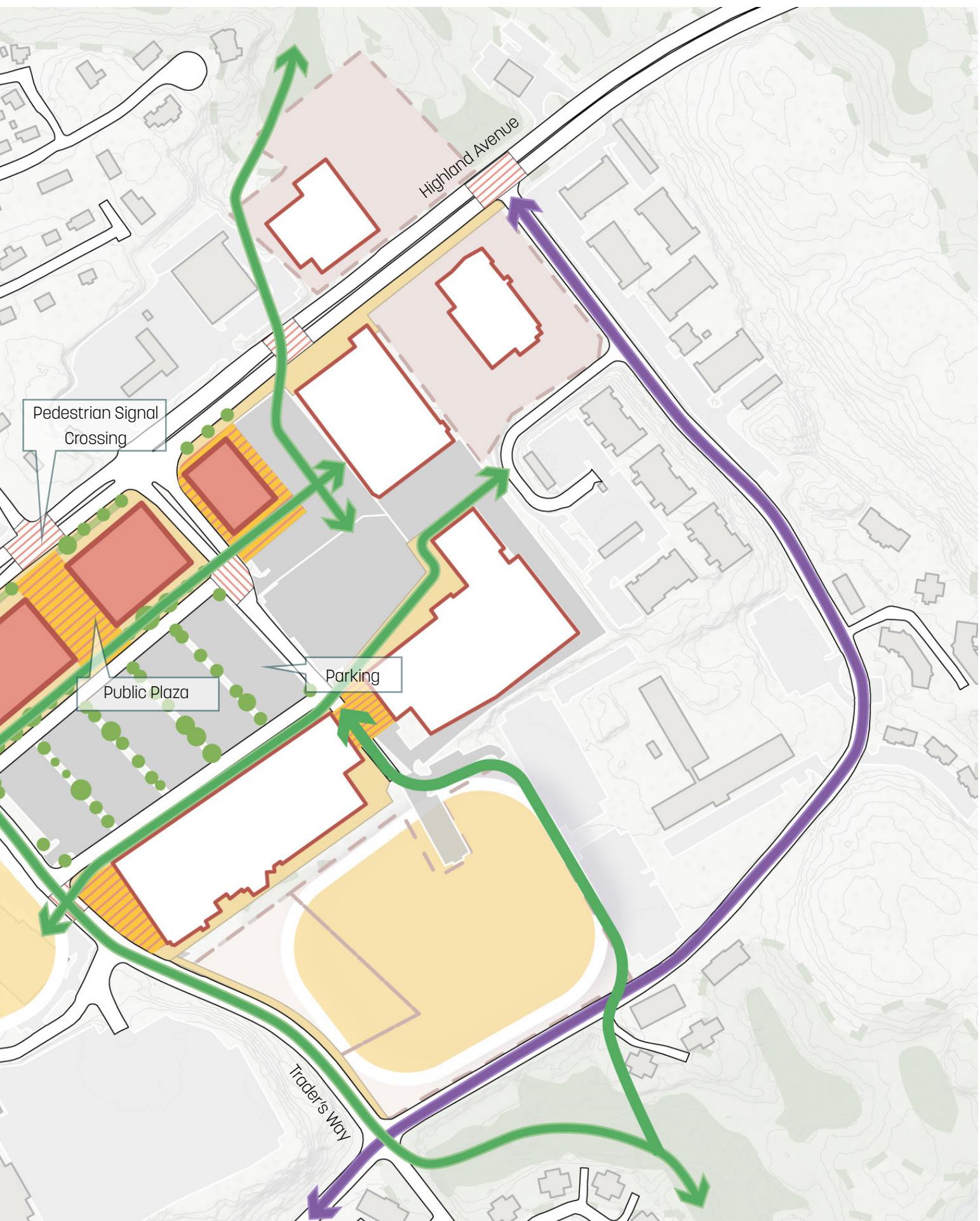
Successful examples of this type of retrofit to a legacy center are becoming increasingly common in the United States. In addition, emerging data is showing that these types of “lifestyle centers” have been weathering the Covid-19 retail downturn more successfully than other types of retail, due to their outdoor public space offerings in tandem with food and beverage and big box retail elements.



Existing Conditions



* This diagram depicts an aspirational plan for a mixed use zone along Highland Avenue . It does not display an approved plan or project.



Big Box Retail Zone

The proposed big box retail zone would be the heart of the Highland Avenue Corridor. This zone would include restaurants, retail, office space and residential space. The zone would center around a public plaza,

be connected to a major pedestrian road crossing, and have a surface level parking lot. The big box retail zone would be designed to serve as a local destination for community members, and a vibrant gathering space.



Westfarms



The Colony, Phoenix AZ



Delmar Colorado



Westbrook Village



Gunbarrel Boulder Colorado



Daybreak Colorado

Existing



Potential



Potential Transformation of The Big Box Retail Zone





Big Box Retail Zone Transformation Scenarios

The big box retail zone options show various possibilities for enriching this zone in the future as more of a place for people. This could be either as phases within a longer-term development process, or the as final scenarios for adding elements to the zone. The scenarios are intended to highlight different areas within big box zone that could be the focus areas of the zone, showing that growth could be incremental, or finite (ie. that the vision is not an all-or-nothing proposition).



Construction of stand-alone destination restaurants within the parking lots of existing retailers. This is a common feature in big box retail areas, and would provide a type of restaurant offering that is absent in the Corridor today. Ideally, these additions would have outdoor seating areas, combined with landscape buffers and tree-planting zones, to create outdoor amenity space that is visually and physically protected from the parking areas.



This scenario indicates a combination of destination restaurants and a limited amount of "liner" building program along Highland Avenue. This would enable attainment of the goal of making the edge of Highland Avenue more visually appealing, while continuing to allow views from Highland Avenue to the parking areas of the big box retailers. The building along Highland Avenue could house office or residential above retail.



This scenario builds on Scenario 2 to propose a more comprehensive edge to Highland Avenue, creating a more urban feel for the Corridor in this location. Further study regarding required parking capacity for the existing big box stores will be necessary.



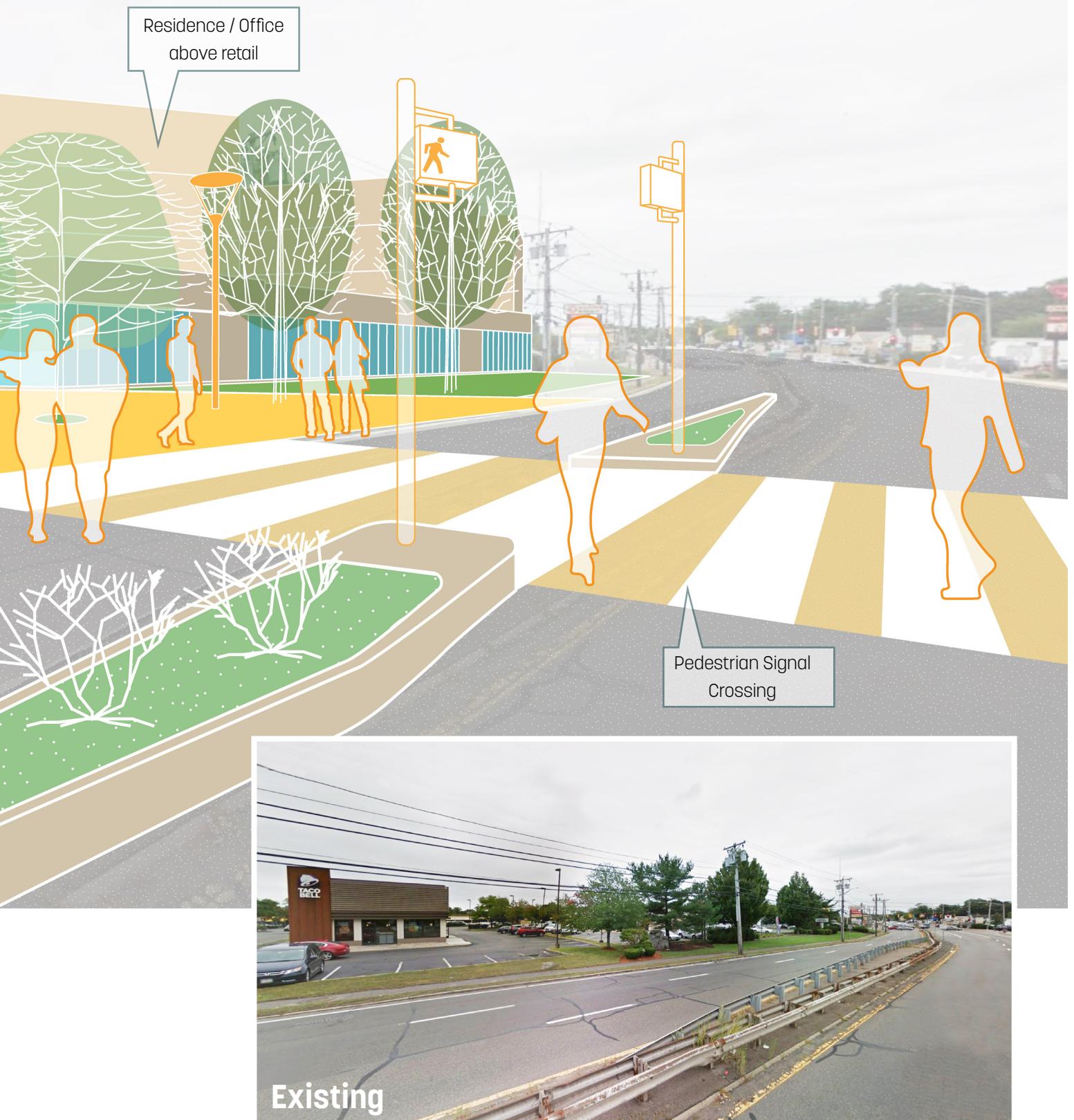
Scenario 4 suggests that the successes of implementing a mini lifestyle center on the site of most of the big box stores of the Corridor might catalyze further change. Consolidation of parcels on the south side of Trader's Way is indicated, with pedestrian connections between these and the lifestyle center north of Trader's Way.



Potential Highland Avenue Transformation

- Buildings framing street edge
- Public outdoor space adjacent to retail
- Signalized pedestrian crossings







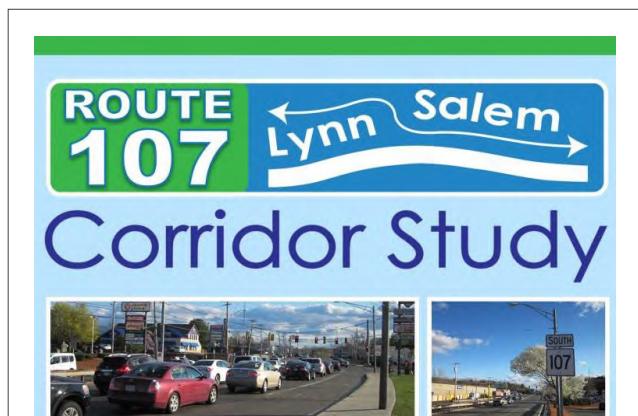


MassDOT Right-of-Way

Existing Conditions

Important steps that can be taken to improve Highland Avenue (some of which are contained in MassDOT's Route 107 report) are:

- Removal of the center-line armco barrier: This will achieve the following:
 - Changes to the visual and psychological impression that the road is first and foremost a high-speed highway;
 - Removal of a literal and psychological barrier to connection between areas east and west of Highland Avenue; pedestrian crossings may be feasible at additional locations;
 - Creation of the opportunity for a center zone of protected left turn pockets, for both directions of traffic, which will in turn decrease pressure on the existing signalized intersections within the Corridor, where all turns currently must occur



ROUTE 107 Lynn → Salem ←
Corridor Study

Route 107 Corridor Study:
Analysis and Multimodal Design of Recommendations Along Route 107 in Salem and Lynn, MA

FINAL REPORT November 2016



A map showing the route of Route 107 through Lynn, Salem, and Swampscott. The route is highlighted in yellow on a satellite-style map of the area.

massDOT | McMahon Associates | Regina Villa Associates

- Creation of wider sidewalks on either side, and that are potentially buffered from the traffic lanes by a green strip (which can also contain stormwater management measures);
- Creation of a bicycle lane on either side, potentially separated from travel lanes by a mountable curb and/or plastic pylons.

Current Project Status:

MassDOT intends to implement the more far-reaching items in its report on Route 107 (removal of barrier and general redesign of the right-of-way) in the medium to long-term, and in the short-term to resurface the roadway.

The vision elements articulated as part of the Corridor Study are aspirational, and are intended to assist the City and community with engagement on the subject of the right-of-way's design with MassDOT, when that occurs in the future.

Constituents can contact State Government agencies to advocate for MassDOT Right-of-Way improvements. Contact options are provided below.

MassDOT

MassDOT Secretary (Current Acting Secretary - Jamey Tesler)
Address: 10 Park Plaza Suite 4160, Boston MA 02116

Governor Baker Office of Constituent Services

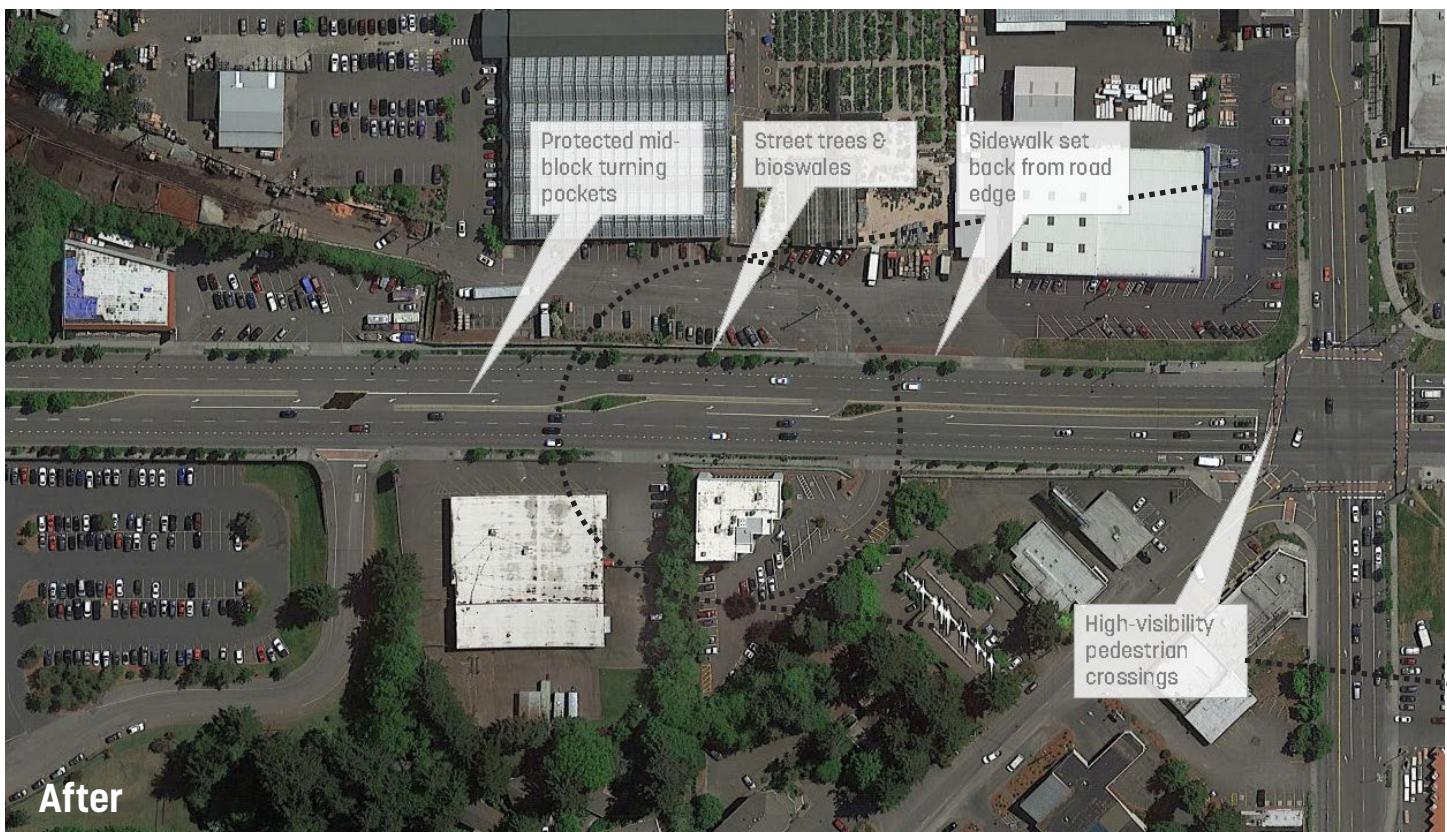
Mass State House, 24 Beacon St, Office of the Governor
Room 280
Boston, MA 02133
(617)725-4005

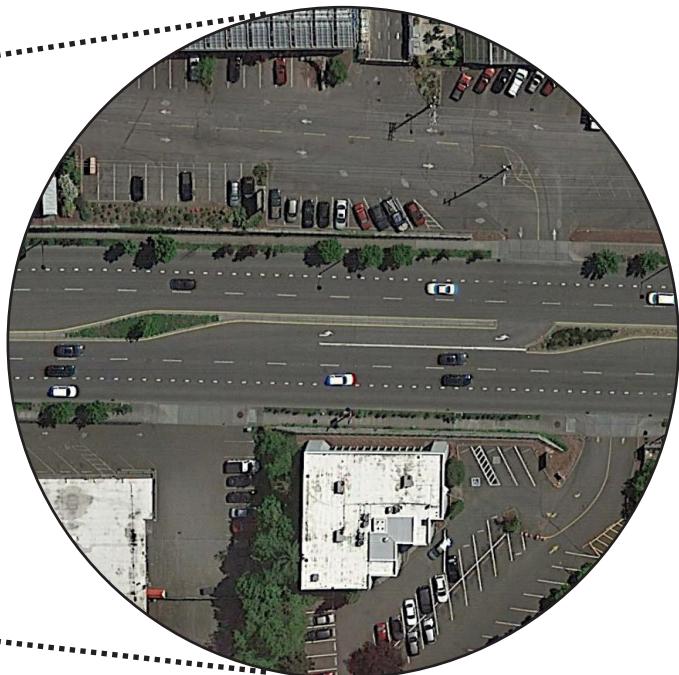
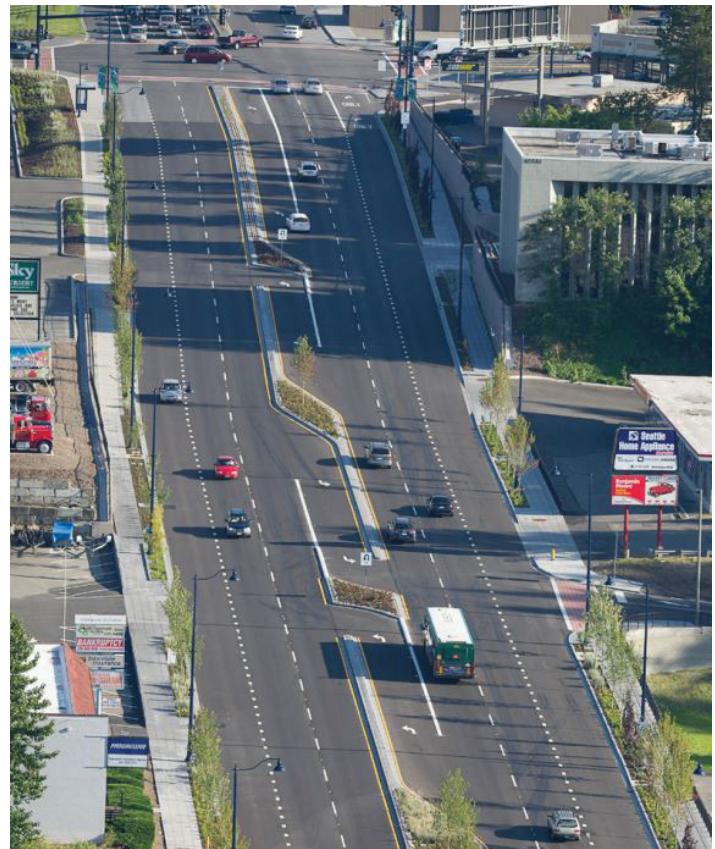


Existing Intersection on Highland Avenue

Right-of-Way Transformation Case Study

Aurora Avenue, Shoreline, WA





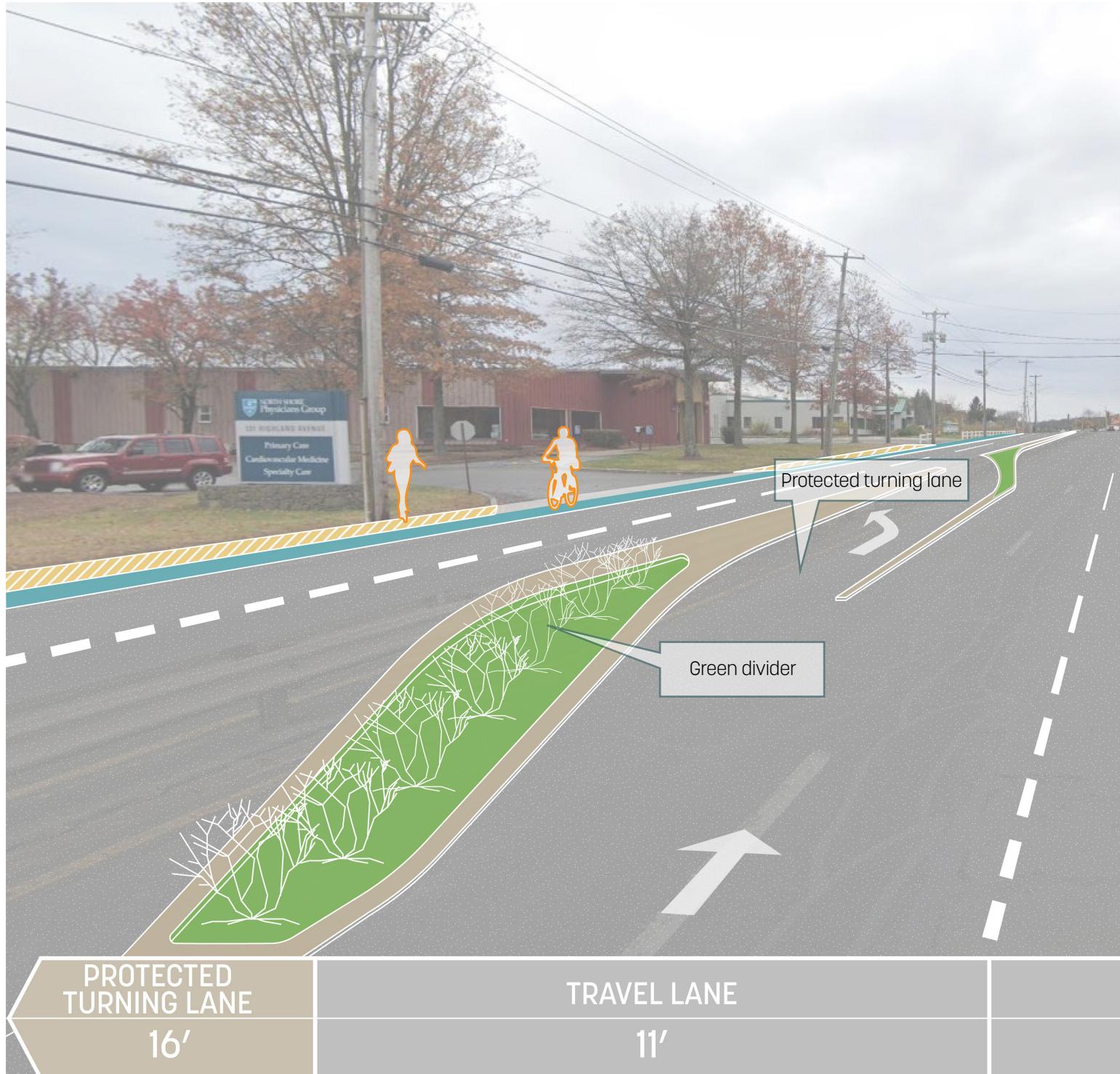
Aurora Avenue in Shoreline, Washington is commuter and retail highway that is similar in nature and function to Highland Avenue in Salem. Recent improvements to the right-of-way of Aurora Avenue included:

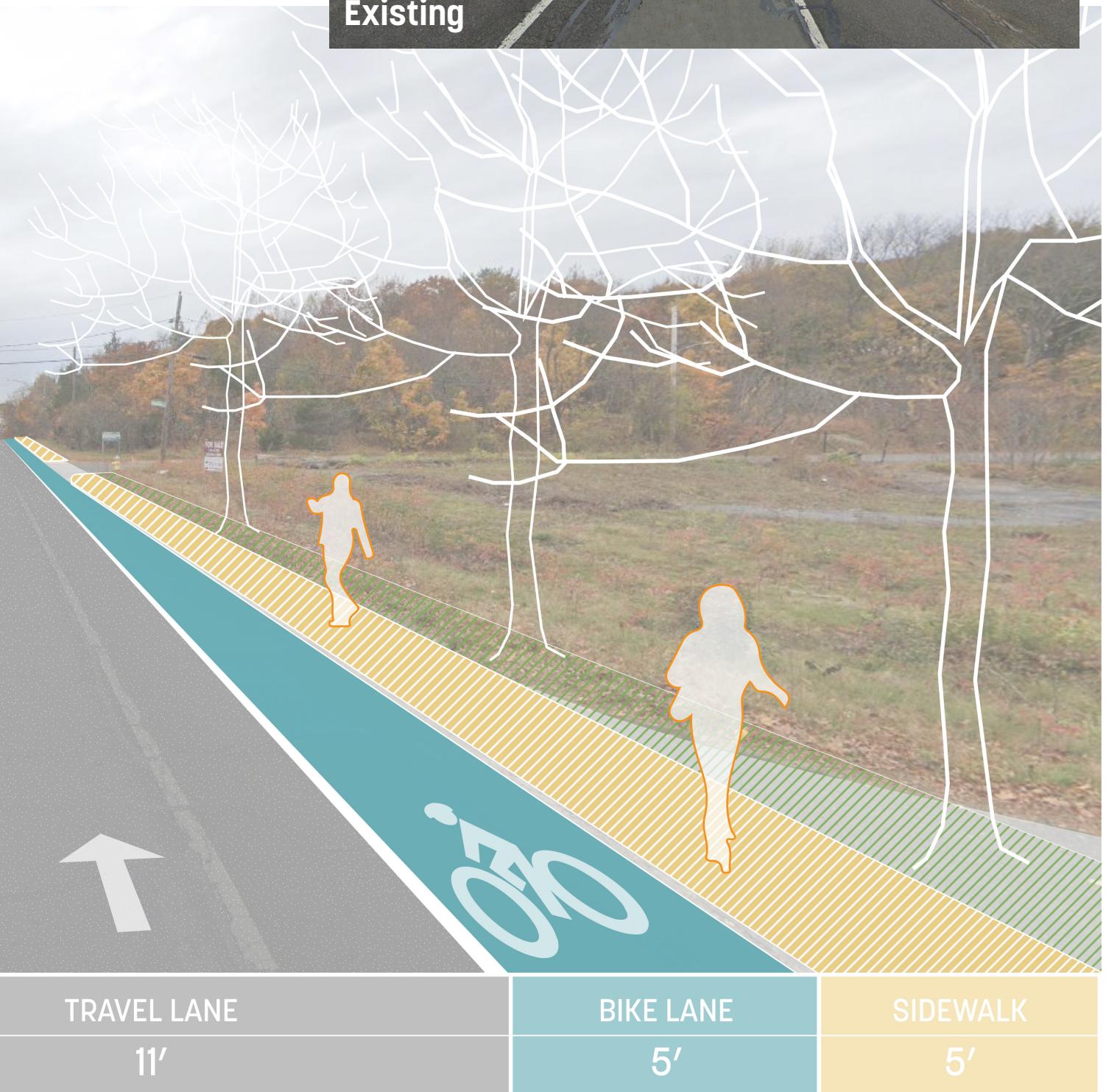
- Creation of pocketed turning lanes, which allow vehicles waiting to turn feel safe on a busy highway (safe from being rear ended), and therefore to not make dangerous cross-traffic turning movements before it is safe to do so;
- Creation of strongly demarcated pedestrian crossings;
- Planting of trees along the right-of-way, and placement of light standards that contributed to sense of place;
- Creation of sidewalks buffered from the roadway by a planting zone that also assists with stormwater management.

Aspirational Right-of-Way Transformation

The “before” photo and “after” diagram on this spread illustrate a vision of what Highland Avenue can become. Removal of the armco-type barrier will give a strong visual cue to traffic that this is not intended to be a high-speed traffic chute; pocketed turning lanes will de-pressure existing signalized intersections and increase custom at roadside businesses; tree plantings will beautify the Corridor; improved sidewalks and creation of bicycle lanes will provide amenity for non-vehicular Corridor users.

Proposed Right-Of-Way Modifications





Public Transit

Bus System

To increase activity in the Corridor without further contributing to existing traffic issues will require implementation of several progressive bus initiatives, such as increased frequency, GPS tracking supported by cellphone apps, and even provision of a dedicated bus lane.



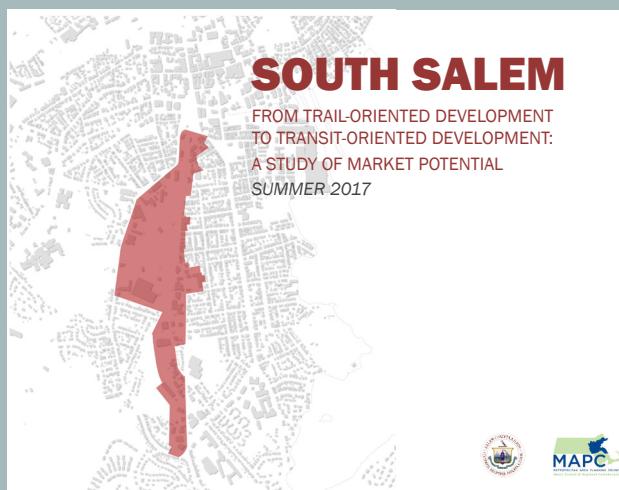
MBTA Buses

Commuter Rail

If the South Salem MBTA Commuter Rail Station is implemented, it would be a game-changer for access to and from the Corridor, particularly if it is combined with "back route" pedestrian and bicycle trails proposed in this report. This would allow a non-vehicle dependent lifestyle for residents of the Corridor.



Salem Commuter Rail Stop



South Salem Study

Intracity Micro-Mobility

Salem has recently been filling the regional public transit gaps within the City with an uncommonly diverse set of affordable and accessible intracity micro-mobility options. These options include the Salem Skipper; a municipal ridesharing service; and a municipal bicycle share. The Salem Skipper works like a minibus that goes to the rider when they want it. In addition to the Salem Skipper, a community car share program; and a new municipal bicycle share program will be launched in early 2021. Salem's intracity micro-mobility options allow residents, visitors and employees to string together different mode choices where appropriate. Salem should continue to make investments in micro-mobility options as they provide opportunities for a care-free or car-light lifestyle and thus relieve the strain of traffic congestion.



Salem Skipper Logo



Salem Skipper Van



BlueBike Rental Bike

7.0

Next Steps

Next Steps

A View To The Future

As Mayor Kim Driscoll noted in her remarks at the second community meeting for this study, the only constant on the Highland Avenue Corridor has always been change; businesses that are here today, were not here in decades past, and in the future there will be other uses on sites within the Corridor. For this reason alone, there is an opportunity for the future of the Corridor to be guided by a vision. Change will inevitably come to the Corridor, and if there is concerted action, that change can be guided to serve the greatest number of people who live in, work in, and visit the Corridor.

From numerous comments received in the community and Working Group meetings, the City and the consultant team fully understand concerns that added growth in the Corridor will bring added congestion, noise, pollution, and possibly gentrification. The current developments on the Trader's Way and Overlook Acres sites demonstrate, however, that change is occurring nevertheless; it occurs in a by-right manner (ie. within current zoning or through Zoning Board of Appeals approvals). Salem has become a highly desirable city for millennials and other demographic groups within the metro Boston area.

If a South Salem MBTA Commuter Rail station is implemented in the future, and if Highland Avenue is restructured by MassDOT to accommodate progressive, safety and amenity-oriented features, these two occurrences alone will have profound, positive implications for the Highland Avenue Corridor.

Due to attention from the City and from MassDOT, the future of the Highland Avenue Corridor is bright. Residents should have hope that their community can begin to offer walkable solutions. Businesses should be able to expect that they will continue to prosper - even prosper more - along the Corridor as change occurs.

This study will in large part have succeeded if the seeds of positive, concerted and organized change are sowed in the minds of stakeholders, such that those stakeholders motivate vigorously with the appropriate authorities and property owners to have a community-based vision implemented.

The next steps after this study, if the ideas contained within it gain traction, will be:

- For the City: to examine what changes to current zoning may be necessary to make elements of the vision attainable
- For the community: to become involved in motivating with MassDOT for the transformation to the Corridor's right-of-way and key intersections that the community desires; and to remain involved in dialogue with the City to attain a vision that meets the needs and aspirations of the greatest number of stakeholders possible.



Big Box Retail Zone

Concrete Steps Forward

The following goals (shown at left) were identified through community engagement as being representative of the key Common Framework Elements that were subsequently developed. These can be implemented in any future development scenario for the Corridor. They are cross-referenced below with several of the practical measures identified during the course of the study (shown at right) to demonstrate concrete steps that can be taken for attaining a vision for the Corridor's future.

Framework Goals

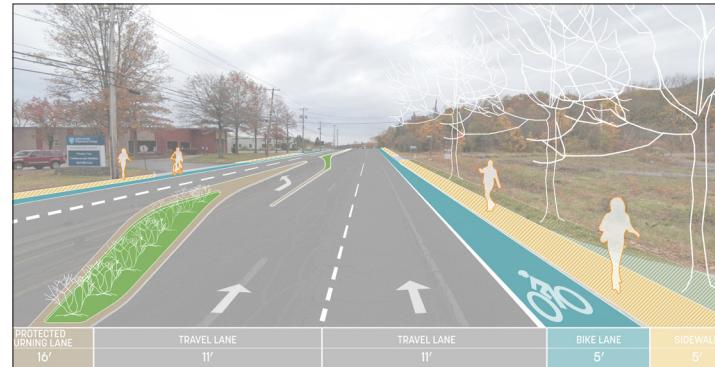
- **Increased walkability/bike-ability:** For residents and visitors alike; decreased reliance on automobiles for shorter, local trips; decreased reliance on using Highland Avenue only as a means of making local trips.
- **Calmer:** Changes to right-of-way to create more turning opportunities, lower overall speed, increased pedestrian crossing locations, lower vehicle speeds overall.
- **Greener:** Planting of trees along Highland Avenue and elsewhere within the Corridor; planted stormwater swales; planted strip between sidewalk and roadway to provide greater pedestrian sense of distance from traffic; greater visual amenity through plantings.
- **More Housing:** Full spectrum residential accommodating diverse household types; more senior housing; more housing in walkable locations.
- **Enhanced Sense of Neighborhood:** Bringing together all of the above measures to create a greater sense of “neighborhood”



Big Box Retail Zone Crossing and Pedestrian Zone

Implementing The Goals

- Further study changes to zoning to encourage projects that will have positive transformational impacts on the Corridor (such as changes to the big box retail zone at the north of the Corridor)
- Engagement and dialogue with existing property owners and businesses to elaborate the Common Framework Elements and goals
- Implementation of progressive measures on streets controlled by the City (ie. streets connecting into Highland Avenue), such as increased bike lanes
- Collaboration with MassDOT for the transformation of the Highland Avenue right-of-way



MassDOT Right of Way

Conclusion of The Study - Looking To The Future

The primary objective of this study was to create the basis for future action regarding Highland Avenue Corridor, whether that action is amendments to zoning to permit some of the objectives of the study, or partnering with MassDOT to insure a better future for the Corridor's right-of-way on Highland Avenue, or development of overall strategies for "opportunity sites" within the Corridor, or all of these elements. Many of these are medium and long-term objectives.

In the short term, one value of the study is to bring to attention to challenges the Corridor confronts - congestion, danger to pedestrians, degradation of quality-of-life for residents, decreased sense of place - even as it serves as a local and regional retail and commercial destination and commuter corridor. A second value is to create for people a sense of what can be achieved for the Corridor, in the near and more distant future. It may not be feasible to implement all aspirations gathered through the community outreach process, and those described in this report, but once the idea of a better future for the Corridor is in the public realm, the hope is that support will grow for concerted action by all stakeholders to make some of those visions real.

Strategies and Next Steps

The City will begin to examine how zoning changes can be implemented to facilitate future opportunities that are consistent with community feedback received during this process, and consistent with the vision laid out in this report. While no specific timeline has been established for these tasks, they can now be clearly identified and prioritized.

Many of the recommendations of this report will require concerted action on the part of individual property owners. Creation of trails across private property boundaries will require that property owners, residents, and the City agree to further study of how and where these can occur.

Given the importance to MassDOT's involvement in the broader process for the Corridor's future, ways of contacting MassDOT are included in this report, as are suggestions for citizens to remain engaged with MassDOT as they carry forward their own studies and projects for the Corridor.

This report has laid out a vision for a connected, calmer, greener Highland Avenue Corridor; one that also has more broad-spectrum residential accommodation in the appropriate place (ie. that is not implemented opportunistically in ways that degrade the commercial role that the Corridor plays in the life of Salem). Ways of leveraging the regional medical presence on the Corridor are also explored as an opportunity for future business location and consolidation. Improvements to the big-box retail nexus at the northern end of the Corridor are described, as being one implementable way to improve aesthetics along the roadway itself, and amenity for residents of the Corridor area, and visitors, without disrupting existing business viability. These changes will lead to a greater sense of place for the Corridor, which will benefit all stakeholders.

The Highland Avenue Corridor is home to many people, in addition to being a local and regional retail and services destination, and a commuter corridor. The feedback that was received in the course of this study was that "local" considerations - creation of a sense of place, a calmer, greener environment, greater privileging of the needs of residents - need to be elevated overall. This can be done without damaging the prospects for continued business success along the Corridor. That is really the primary task for the future; establish a sense of place, balancing opportunistic growth with cohesion.



Chestnut Hill Square, Route 9, Newton MA: Front-edge retail creates a defined edge to a commuter corridor, with big box retail and parking behind.



3rd Avenue, Burlington MA: A "village street" is created within a mixed retail and residential zone, with park and plaza spaces adjacent to retail elements.

8.0

Appendix

Community Meeting 1

Oct. 28, 2020 - Miro Board Comments

Community Meeting 1 focused on receiving comments from community members on the existing conditions of the Corridor, and on what it could become. Following a short presentation on the team's initial analysis on the existing corridor, the community members were asked to respond to different prompts in the form of Miro boards. This board asked community members to identify challenges with the Corridor today. The comments were pasted on the board in real time during the meeting, and can be seen here.

Last survey was going to do something about timing lights when traffic light but havent noticed this in practice

Traffic is backed up right now down Marlborough Road towards Peabody

Traffic isn't working well, even after halloween, intersections are blocked

Physical characteris of Highland Ave (median with guardrails) gives message that traffic should be moving f

1

TODAY (Challenges)



EXISTING PROJECTS

Coordinate with MassDOT rebuilding of Rt 107 Highland Ave

Your earlier map of expected construction did not include active construction of Houses on Clark Ave or Osborne Hills



At Walmart's - separate one way road going south

With the corridor a main artery to Salem Hospital, emergency vehicles have a difficult time getting to hospital

UNCLEAN PROPERTY

Various Businesses do not care for their roadside property very well - lots of trash



Many businesses to clear their sidewalks of snow during the winter, making it difficult for pedestrian access

Construction should build arnd trees and not bulldoze the entire landscape - leave trees standing



Wednesday October 28 2020

Sep. 28, 2020 - Miro Board Comments

The second board at Community Meeting 1 prompted participants to consider what opportunities they saw in the current conditions of the Corridor. These comments can be seen here.

BIKEABLE AND WALKABLE

COMMUN

2 OPPORTUNITIES

CINEMA WORLD PROJECT

No cinemaWorld PLEASE! an upscale restaurant would be great as would a park with walking trails. Having the transfer station be developed would also be beneficial

Cinema space could be used for a nice restaurant

Community food garden

A n
The
par
of I
t

Pulco Realty

44
Highland -
Walmart

Projects underway

Projects in permitting

Parcels under consideration

Highland Avenue Corridor Study | Public

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

CITY FOOD SUPPLY

Perhaps a food security project like the Mack Park food farm

Community food garden would be great benefit

nic public park. There is no public park located west Marlborough rd towards Lynn

To beautify the corridor with landscaping

GREENSPACE

Mixed use development, family restaurants, senior housing, job creation

More business development such as medical, light industrial, med services. Salem needs more mid market well paying jobs

SENIOR HOUSING

Need more senior and affordable housing vs large luxury apts development

Assisted living or tiered care senior housing

CINEMA WORLD PROJECT

Cinema space could be used for nice restaurant

Q: Is the Cinema project going forward?

Project is not proceeding

Sep. 28, 2020 - Miro Board Comments

The third board at Community Meeting 1 asked community members to share what their aspirations are for the Corridor. Those comments can be seen here.

GENERAL ENVIR

3

ASPIRATIONS

A nice
restaurant!

Below are

Walkable
retail

a well cared
for
highland
ave

More
greener
and place
to walk

with the new
housing going up
on First Street and
on Highland Ave,
fixing the traffic is
essential

WALKABLE

A (Housing)



Would like to
add more
walkable space
to the corridor
if possible

I like the idea of
walkable retail,
but I'm not sure
how this would fit
into the corridor.



C (Walkable Retail)



Highland Avenue Corridor Study | Public Me

ONMENT

Post Covid
we need
green areas
to walk

Perhaps area
behind target
could become a
green area/food
farm/walking
trails

HOUSING

An olive garden or
legal seafoods
with a big parking
lot, wouldn't that
make sense?

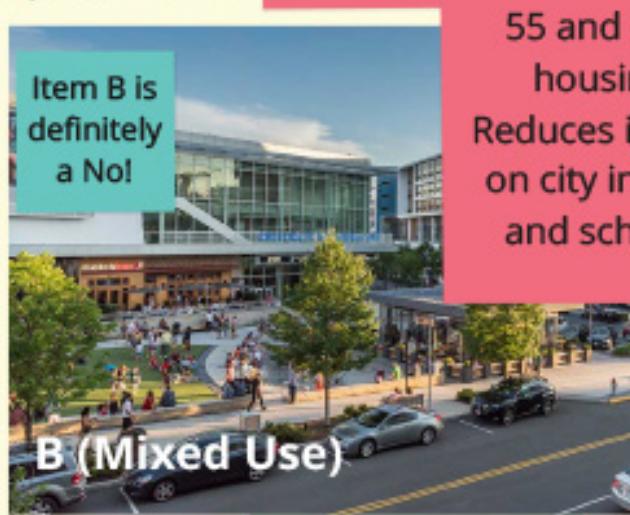
Smaller scale
housing projects
perhaps with the "walkable
retail"

Less high rise
apts, more
single level
senior condos

and your own i

55 and over
housing.
Reduces impact
on city infrast.
and schools

Mixed use
with
multifamily
housing



B (Mixed Use)

Mixed use
with multi
family
housing



PHOTO RESPONSES

NOT a feature
restaurant.
Just good
smaller
restaurants.

There is already
Hawthorne Plaza and
Walmart on this
stretch. Don't need
more big box stores or
mall like structures

Low
height
buildings

Community Meeting 2

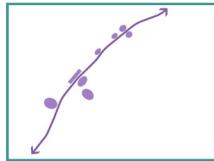
Jan. 12, 2021 - Miro Board Comments

Community Meeting 2 focused on three proposed scenarios for the Corridor, and getting feedback from community members on these scenarios. The meeting began with a presentation explaining each scenario, and then again used Miro boards to gather comments from the participants. Comments received can be seen here.

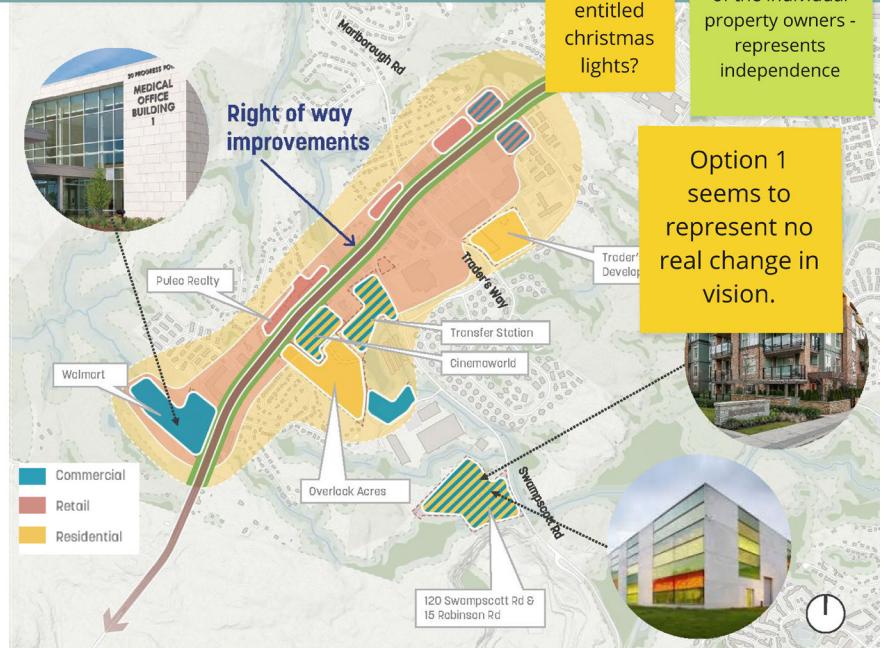
Potential Retail Zone Improvements



Big Picture Idea 1: "Christmas Lights"



- Baseline option. Accepts current basic nature of the Corridor, and seeks incremental improvements (e.g. Corridor right-of-way improvements, best uses of key sites along Corridor)
- Opportunistic, by-right growth strategy on major sites, within current zoning, or moderately modified zoning
- Not contingent on larger connections across parcels, or on land assembly



To consider:

What do you like or dislike about each option?

Is there anything you would like to see that is not included in these options?

Big Picture Idea 3: Integrated Commercial District



- Treats Highland-Swampscott-Marlborough intersection zone as the "State and Main" of the Corridor, with future commercial activity leveraging that intersection
- Opportunity to create a mixed use (retail and res.) development on Cinemaworld site with "back street" links (ped., bike, even vehicle) to the existing retail nexus to the north



To consider:

What do you like or dislike about each option?

Is there anything you would like to see that is not included in the

Jan. 12, 2021 - Miro Board Comments

Community members engaged in a lively discussion around what they would like to see on Highland Avenue. Comments that were not in response to a particular scenario options were collected together and can be seen here.

General Feedback

Sustainability/Green Space/Livability

I would like to see more options for use of renewable resources (ex: solar panels and more greenery)

I like the idea of walking paths, solar panels & greenery also. However, as a resident of Marlborough Road near the intersection with Highland Ave, the traffic is the number one headache.

I love the idea of walkability to a "State and Main" area... but how would that option impact traffic and what would be parking considerations?

I like the green walking paths

The super bowl sized parking lot at Home Depot - any chance that the half of the lot never used be reconfigured to a more sustainable (i.e. non-asphalt) purpose?

I love the idea of pathways - I'm fairly new to Salem and I am very impressed by the paths and railtrails you have here. The more the better.

Preserving what little open space and wooded areas remain is crucial.

And I strongly agree with the person who said maintaining greenspace is crucial—I love my coyotes!

I would like to see some sort of a 55+ community development space.

Is part of the planning process to identify broad city efforts needed to subsidize affordable and/or senior housing? The aspirational plans are good.

Residential

residential developments bring less traffic

Questions/Considerations and T

Is there consideration of better public transport (buses/shuttles) to connect amenities with the important institutions along Highland Ave, the hospital, the high school? This might help create the sense of place/neighborhood.

Do you see a functioning local transit system that minimizes the need for parking lots? Or an economic option that makes large expensive parking inefficient?

development of 120 units at Swampscott would be difficult becoz of the seismic and acoustical disturbances of the quarry

MIXED USE/COMMERCIAL AND RETAIL DEV

This area is already pretty busy and successful in terms of commercial/retail. What about using a different area to develop from scratch? Adding an additional place that is not yet developed could create an additional point of interest

I'm a big fan of the mixed development option. I think we need more food options in the Highland Ave area than just fast food.

For all three options, I would like to see a walking trail to observe nature and not just to connect the various commercial areas.

Yes, I like that mixed use idea—nicer restaurants and pedestrian friendly

I love the mixed use/3rd big concept. Potential center of activity. Pretty ambitious?

attracting businesses for our tax base is very important

Transportations/Infrastructure and transit

about
station
connect
important
and Ave—
cool—
sense of
od
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the
mpscott
Rd., and
Its
one of
any
Lynn
ough.

The right of
way needs a
little more
explanation.

Aging sewer and water
infrastructure must be
improved before more
development happens.
There have been serious
and disruptive water
breaks on Highland Ave.
over the last year.

Dovetailing your
aspirations with the state's
107 study will be key so
that you're not working at
cross purposes. Highland
Ave could really use a
center lane used for
turning.

For many families living nearby it is more
important to keep having a peaceful
neighborhood where our kids can safely
play on the streets without additional
traffic, noise, pollution than having
additional retail and restaurants nearby.
does the implementation of any of these
asp. plans include bldg new paved rds or
opening dead end streets? This could
damage the safety and well being of
hundreds of families.

What is the status
of a South Salem
commuter
station? This is the
first I've heard of
it.

My number one priority is
maintaining a high quality of life
for the residents on both sides of
Highland Ave. They study must
key in on traffic issues along with
future developments that will
work.

Tim Flynn
Ward 4 City Councillor

Is part of the planning
process to identify broad
city efforts needed to
subsidize affordable and/or
senior housing? The
aspirational plans are
good.

Speaking of "lots
of asphalt that's
never used" what
about the super-
sized Home Depot
parking lot?

(Mayor Driscoll Response) In the
process of adding this stop in
collaboration with the T. Would
be a small station just to service
the neighborhood and nearby
institution. T is hurting right now.
Salem will continue to advocate
for this. Funding has begun. Will
not be next year, but possible
soon. Would be a public private
partnership.

I like the idea of
getting rid of the
107 median -
excellent point
about the speed
ups.

As citizens/residents, can
we advocate directly with
MassDOT for improvements
to 107? If so, what is the
most effective way to do
so? Through our
councilors/legislators?
Email? Thanks for any
suggestions.

All of these methods
are acceptable.
Local counselors can
be a great way to
direct letters to
MassDOT. Being
engaged is essential.

We have heard that
MassDOT has hired
a consultant for 107,
so this is a good
step, but we must
continue to move
them forward.

Mayors Comments

Mayor Kim Driscoll - It is not going to be
the same! We are advocating for positive
improvements. Considering the
neighborhoods off the road is very
important. Many parcels along the road
are not owned by the city. The purpose
of this work is where should we be trying
to incentivize and impact the way change
and growth happens on the corridor.

How to get people around
the neighborhood without
the need to own a car -
Mayor. 2nd train stn., ferry
service, bike share, ride
share. Public transit also
good for climate change,
resiliency.

Consolidate some
of the housing,
restaurants here
on the asphalt -
Mayor

Working Group Meetings

Working Group Takeaways - Meeting 1, Sep. 29, 2020

- Condos on traders village - they drive everywhere. Would love to see more local restaurants and shops. Otherwise they have to drive to Swampscott. Love to see more bus service in the area.
- Don't think Highland is long enough for bus lane. People feel blocked in by Highland Avenue , lots of congestion. Voted to try to support zoning change for Cinemaworld but unsuccessful. They wanted housing with a restaurant (less disruptive).
- Barcelona and Highland intersection hard to attract because how do you even get there?
- Take out divider - make it boulevard with trees and flowers. Trees in the center. (This would attract more retail of restaurants on the Corridor)
- Many restaurants closed - but opportunities for more to come in within 6 months after covid dies down.
- Dialysis site is difficult to develop. (unattractive)
- Hospital is the anchor - customers from there.
- Cut through from Marlboro to Swampscott is really bad.
- Opportunities to create moments of local character. Keep businesses in Salem!
- Traffic is problem number 1
- Pressure for more housing stock helps with affordability
- Would love to be a local space! But will still have regional traffic.
- Pedestrian and Bikes should be able to be used on Highland Avenue . Need safety.
- There is lots of opposition to development.
- There is a worry that retail will cause more traffic. Attractive retail will attract more business but cause more congestion.
- Economic, balance, attractive.
- Use the vacant properties to relieve some off the issues in the short term of then other developments in the longterm.
- Highland Avenue is under-served in terms of restaurants.
- Major intersections are so difficult to navigate and turn around. Restaurants like to be at locations east to get in and out.

Working Group Takeaways - Meeting 2, Dec. 16, 2020

- Mass DOT improvements are an important value added to Highland Avenue, but they are not required for any of the scenarios.
- The state prioritizes improvements based on crash and safety data.
- There is hope that the working group will draw on their connections. Encouraging people to attend the meetings or listen to the recordings.
- Like the idea of getting secondary roadway off of Swampscott road, would alleviate traffic concerns.
- The ability to turn around on Highland Avenue is important.
- Various options provided are helpful for visualization.
- Improving the integrated commercial district would make a big difference because there are a lot of people who live nearby.
- Repairing right of way would make a big difference!
- Walking along Highland Avenue feels very dangerous due to speed of cars.

Public Comments Received after Jan 12th Meeting

- Of the three options presented the integrated commercial district was by far the worst. Since that is the most congested section of the 107 Corridor, making that 'state and main'.
- By at least spreading out any development, it would not be loading more traffic to the road at a single section. I think about ambulances trying to get the medical center from Lynn.
- The idea of creating a road from the southern portion of 107 to connect with Swampscott Rd might eliminate some of the traffic heading south on Swampscott road, but at many meetings I've been to (Overlook, Cinemaworld, etc) it has been made pretty clear that there is no way to put a road through there - too much rock, too much wetland area, etc. Bike paths/sidewalks which certainly wouldn't help out on the traffic. Before we start talking about developing the Corridor, there has to be some plan on alleviating the traffic issues (bike lanes may help with bikes but will not eliminate the increasing traffic on that corridor) that will only be increasing with Trader's Row and Overlook Acres. I truly can't see where there might be 'back streets' going to retail areas in the north.
- With all the development of large residential complexes, the neighborhoods have become crowded urban areas.
- By adding more buildings in this already built up area dismisses any semblance of peace, quiet, and gentle living. Therefore, the best option would be the Christmas light scenario - at least here the commercial look of the area would be spread out along the road, rather than concentrated all in the Hawthorne Plaza area. That way, there will be more 'sense of place' rather than look like blocks and blocks of what looks like a mall. High rise buildings of all types have a smaller foot print, but they certainly don't provide any enhanced sense of place, greater visual and experiential quality.

- One thing that the City seems short of is business that provide some tax revenue to the City. Several of the bigger employers have left the area, which puts more and more burden on homeowners property taxes. It would be good if development could include additional sources of revenue for the City, as well as offering employment opportunities.
- As is obvious, with or without this specific survey, there is a need for a 'nice' restaurant where locals can get a glass of wine and a decent meal (does not need to be high end though Olive Garden may NOT be the answer - not a chain, please!)
- A mixed use development is completely unappealing visually, but the concept of cramming in so many residences and shops together is not my idea of 'sense of place'. While the concept may be appealing, in practice I'm not sure how well it actually plays out. Salem is a historic city, and trying to build up the outskirts to look like urban sprawl just doesn't seem to fit the culture and feel for our city.
- Not enough consideration for the Forest River and its tributaries that are impacted by continued development
- Transfer Station parcel development implies going across wetlands and the river.
- All the green pathways? Across wetlands, conservation land, train tracks? While I support trails, walking and biking paths, the map of green lines seem perhaps misleading?
- Lack of mention of city services. I heard in Salem's MVP community resilience workshop the concern of police and fire about servicing the Highland Avenue Corridor. Need to plan where a fire house can go along this corridor. Do not give away or eliminate options. This should be decided soon if not along the Corridor perhaps at the Salem High School.
- Both the police station and Lafayette/New Derby fire station are in future flood risk areas. Police station has flooded before and no flood proofing has been done to my knowledge. These stations may remain but should not remain as the headquarters and need to identify alternatives soon.
- Closer example of pleasing development is Market Street, Lynnfield.
- Must have language requiring low impact development. Especially for trees! I am so tired of seeing new trees and sidewalks going in with no access to the street stormwater.
- Green roofs might be good here too.
- Liked ideas about Highland Avenue safe walking and biking but will not feel safe unless bike path and sidewalk are separated from the traffic by vegetation strips - slides about Aurora Ave WA. Look at Harmony Grove Road – North River bike and walking study.

Working Group Member Comments - Meeting 3, Feb. 3, 2021

Draft of the report was circulated to working group members prior to the meeting. Following presentation of the draft report by Sasaki these were the comments received from working group members. (Including email follow up to the City)

- Missing a discussion in next steps of a need for better public transportation. Along Highland Avenue and into Boston.
- Fear that we are not addressing the traffic issue. People are worried about adding more to Highland Avenue.
- During the meetings many people mentioned additional retail and dining, shouldn't that be a goal?
- Good ideas! Not too aspirational. All comes back to the traffic - if we can't fix that we can't do anything.
- Are you looking at bringing medical businesses onto Highland Avenue? People like this idea
- People who live off the secondary streets (i.e. First street) don't want their streets used as major traffic streets
- The T owns a lot of land around the stop, so there is an opportunity to create a whole new area/neighborhood there.
- When you look at businesses that people are in and out all day, that underscores the need for public transportation
- The idea of having more local office space on Highland Avenue is intriguing but adds more traffic as well
- Having a connection to downtown/being able to walk is a great benefit! Builds community
- Addressing the residential. Lets be very aspirational. Likes the trails
- Want to underscore that these options are hard to imagine when thinking about the reality of all the traffic on this road.

- Living on this road am really able to see the true amount of traffic, and that it is there at all times of day.
- We want it to be its on place, not just a pass through. It should have its own identity
- There would be a better sense of community if people on opposite sides of Highland Avenue could connect
- Like the idea of connecting the neighborhoods that are around Highland Avenue
- Nicer accessibility to neighborhoods
- Westbridge, Virginia - Commuter rail station plus many trails and paths
- There are footpaths somewhere (near target?). Would be helpful to show in diagrams.
- Mid block turning pockets could provide some better options for reversing direction (at a minimum, a center turning lane would be a huge help) as long as existing traffic lanes are not removed.

Draft Final Report Comments Received

Public Comments Period, February to March, 2021

- I'm forwarding a screenshot about the recent Burlington site readiness grant to look at the roadway mall network for mixed use development. As we move forward with Highland Avenue planning and the final report, I'm flagging this site readiness approach as something to consider for existing shopping centers or even some of the vacant land. If we can get a property owner to play ball, there might be some interesting ways to knit together growth pods.

- Prior to living in Salem at the Sanctuary condominiums, I lived in Lynn near the intersection of Eastern & Western Avenues. So I've had a lot of travel along Western Ave. & Highland for over 40 years. There has NEVER been any improvement in the traffic flow issues in all these years.

After reading through your draft proposal, in my opinion, this issue is still not being seriously addressed where the suggestions will actually improve the traffic flow. From what I read, the median strip is basically being removed creating one lane in either direction and putting in left-hand turn lanes. How does that improve the flow of traffic? Proposing left hand turn lanes is not going to improve the traffic flow in my opinion. It will create more traffic back-ups as the proposed left-hand turn lanes are too short creating queues and blocking travel lanes. I feel it will also create a greater potential for accidents along the corridor.

Your proposal of "enhancement and accentuation of existing roads" gives me no comfort that it will alleviate the already over-congestion of all these roads in the study. How are you going to achieve this? Are you going to widen the roads? The 3 of them already connect to Highland Ave. During holidays, weekends, and certain times of the day, it's impossible to leave the Whalers Lane heading toward Highland Ave. to cross over to Marlborough Road. It can take 20 minutes. The number of cars travelling N/S on Highland Ave. that go through the light/intersection at Traders way, is about twice that of the number of cars crossing from Traders Way to Marlborough Road. This results in traffic to backing

up to First Street which creates the additional problem of ingress and egress to the local shops and grocery stores. It's a nightmare.

Has the committee considered building more roads connecting Peabody, Salem, Swampscott to Highland Ave. at different points along Highland Ave. Or considered building an overpass/by-pass road connecting Swampscott Road & Marlboro Road and that could also be accessed from Highland Ave North & South without re-routing traffic through the mall/Traders Way? This would alleviate a great deal of congestion in the area.

Until the traffic situation is seriously addressed, I cannot support adding construction that would only add more congestion to this already over-congested area.

- Connecting to the rest of Salem in multiple entry/exit points: Today, as the report points out well, Highland Ave is very much a throughway with view entry and exit points to the rest of Salem. If you're in The Point for instance you really have to go all around through the near downtown zone (by the post office), then through the area by the police station, then through a small residential/industrial area then you get to the area. We drive or walk longer than the point to point distance. I am glad to see that all three options of overarching design consider additional ways to connect the City to the corridor as it often does indeed feel very secluded from Salem and more of a commercial/industrial park rather than a part of Salem.

- Something for further analysis/consideration: In regards to parking, the study does not account for any possible underground or multilevel parking incentives or opportunities we should be creating. When we allow parking to just be sprawl and open flat space, we decide that the cost to build underground or multi-level above ground is too high and supersedes the quality of life we could create by better utilizing that flat space. A more compact and dense horizontal lot could open ground space for A) more housing, B) more greenspace, C) more

playgrounds, D) more recreational use, E) better public transit access routes, among many other possible better uses, that would shift the focus to people's needs rather than cars' needs. Such lots could also be permitted for residential use so they don't go empty at night, which is a massive problem with commercial flat parking lots.

- In regards to existing retail, the study does not account for the possible usage of air rights to build additional levels above those single level buildings. Granted this might be a challenge given the big box style of those structures and that further renovations would possibly be needed inside to create a more solid foundation to build on top of them, this is something that could still be placed in the general equation. This could be especially useful because for every floor up we go, the more opportunity for the same styles of space I mention above can be created. Conversely, building newer, more state-of-the-art and green buildings that those currently established businesses could move into, might also be a good approach, but the underlying point here is that those single story big box style structures should go away and pave the way for better, people focused designs.

- I would recommend looking to both Assembly Row and Station Landing in Somerville and Medford as a local example of how we can accomplish some of the points I am bringing up to this, and both those examples are missing from this study as well.

- For the most part, I am happy that there is this level of interest in alleviating some major concerns of the residents of this part of Salem.

As for your 3 proposals, I prefer #3, Integrated Commercial District.

- a) Having most of the "Big Box" stores located in one place makes it more convenient for "Big Box" type shopping.

- b) Focusing the traffic drawn to these business into one location removes it from constant back and forth to spread out stores.

- c) The walking/biking paths are greatly needed to give the pedestrians a means of getting away from the noise and traffic.

- ISSUES:

- a) There are several "small-pocket" neighborhoods at the south end of the corridor. These small communities have with no connection to any of the other neighborhoods except walking out and down Highland Ave with baby carriage and small children. They need playgrounds, community meeting places for neighbors to get to know each other. They don't have to be elaborate – commensurate with the size of the neighborhood.

- b) All of the time and effort put forth to provide the residents of Salem with safe, calm walking/biking paths will be for nothing if plans are not made to include maintenance, trash cleaning, and snow removal. Otherwise, for 4-6 months each year, we will be relegated to walking in the breakdown lane of Highland Ave. as we have been doing for many long years. Even if you make those lovely sidewalks along Highland Ave. as shown in the models, if no one clears them, they're useless.

- c) Finally, with all of these lovely pictures of how Highland Ave will look, it doesn't look to me as though it will be capable of handling 50% more traffic than it's already choking on. In fact, it looks the same – 2 lanes of traffic with turn arounds. I don't think any of these proposals will do anything for the NUMBER ONE PROBLEM.

- I have lived and worked along Highland Avenue, Route 107, for over 10 years. I currently live here still at 90 Highland Ave. and I had my medical office in this building for nine years. Highland Avenue can also be called the Salem Speedway because people are constantly speeding and it is very dangerous. I have written everybody for years asking for more speed limit signs as there is a dearth of them. The speed limit is 30 miles an hour from Boston Street to the pedestrian bridge after the Salem High School. That is actually the current speed limit but you wouldn't know it because of the lack of signs.

- Rte. 107 in Lynn works fine with one lane each way. I think we should have a one lane road with the right-hand lanes dedicated only to emergency vehicles, buses and people making right turns only. This can also be used as a bicycle lane. A one lane road would reduce speeding, pollution and noise. From Boston St. until past the Salem High School the area is zoned residential R1, R2, R3 and after Freeman Road it becomes B2 (business highway).
- Slow the traffic down! People are speeding all over Salem. Pedestrians constantly complain about the difficulty and danger crossing our streets. There are motor vehicle accidents caused by speeding frequently. One of our finest, Officer Dana Mazola, was killed last year on Jefferson Avenue by a speeder going 55 miles an hour in a 25 mile an hour zone. We cannot prevent people from speeding but we can deter them. This is a major public safety issue. Speed bumps, speed humps and single lanes of traffic are proven ways of slowing traffic down.
- Finally, plant trees, trees, trees! A greener and slower corridor would make Highland Ave. more attractive, friendlier and safer for pedestrians, bicyclists and people in wheelchairs. That's it in a nutshell. Your report makes some good points but misses the larger picture. The purpose of this study, we were told years ago, was to make a highway into a boulevard.
- I attended one of the meetings and have looked over the draft study. Lots of good ideas. My only concern is the development of any new land. As it stands, the woodland creatures that previously lived in the Traders Way area have migrated over to my neighborhood. Until now, I never appreciated how many animals lose their homes due to new development. The mice trying to get into my basement are a nuisance, and the steady stream of deer and coyotes through my neighborhood are potentially dangerous. Please consider conservation as much as possible in the Highland Ave. planning.
- The corridor is hostile towards walkers and bikers. Even though I would prefer to walk or bike, the high speeds of the roads themselves, poor condition of some sections of walkway, and car-centric signaling and entrances to parking lots encourage me to drive, which just adds to traffic and parking needs for everyone. Motorists enter and exit parking lots towards shopping at very high speeds and the wide lanes encourage aggressive driving.
- The highway-with-stripmalls configuration discourages spending time in the area. Users are incentivized to get in, do their shopping, and get out. The Precedent examples in the study I think are demonstrative of what an alternative looks like - whether residential or mixed-use with retail, the examples show places that are more relaxed, greener, and feel like a place you want to go instead of dreading going.
- I applaud Salem's continued efforts to make greener and more useful spaces that are for anything but driving fast and parking. I hope to see these trends continue as we examine how we plan areas like Highland Avenue.
- Mid block turning pockets could provide some better options for reversing direction (at a minimum, a center turning lane would be a huge help) as long as existing traffic lanes are not removed. I'm assuming these 'pockets' would be added where the current center barriers exist. Though I must admit it was kind of hard to get a true picture since the photos provided generally had bigger, wider thoroughfares with much less traffic than we usually see on Highland Ave. As well, I actually laughed at the photo of Highland Ave Corridor today (near the Irving station) since it must have been taken at 6 a.m. Its the only time I've ever seen that little traffic on that road.

- I'm not at all sure what was said about the 2016 study but there were no viable proposals for improving the 'zigzag' congestion/backup that came out of that survey. Maybe they presented other suggestions but not much from that study has made much difference. Case in point: they suggested putting in some special traffic lights that would know there is no traffic coming one direction, and change to let traffic gathering at the alternate side of the signals. I have not experienced any improvement in that area.

- Of the three options presented (and since there wasn't much detail on the slides, I'm basing much of my comments on the designs), the integrated commercial district was by far the worst. Since that is the most congested section of the 107 corridor, making that 'state and main' would only add to the problem. By at least spreading out any development, it would not be loading more traffic to the road at a single section. I think about ambulances trying to get the medical center from Lynn. That section of Highland Ave is already more than sufficiently built up - the last thing that area needs any more box stores or high rise apartment buildings (Traders Row has already saturated the neighborhood with apartments).

- The idea of creating a road from the southern portion of 107 to connect with Swampscott Rd might eliminate some of the traffic heading south on Swampscott road, but at many meetings I've been to (Overlook, Cinemaworld, etc) it has been made pretty clear that there is no way to put a road through there - too much rock, too much protected wetland area, etc. There was some kind of proposal listed - it looked like a slide with green lines circumventing Technology Way on it but that looked more like bike paths/sidewalks which certainly wouldn't help out on the traffic. As you probably know by now, I feel that before we start talking about developing the corridor, there has to be some plan on alleviating the traffic issues (bike lanes may help with bikes but will not eliminate the increasing traffic on that corridor) that will only be increasing with Trader's Row. I truly can't see where there might be 'back streets' going to

retail areas in the north. I certainly hope they don't mean using First Avenue to go to Trader's Way - try getting out onto First Street now with the current traffic from Whaler's Lane. Yes, there is a light, but the other end of the street is tough to get out on. First Street is a residential street and that is not the place to reroute traffic off Swampscott Rd (in fact that was one of the suggestions at the 2016 study that had no support in the city, including the Mayor).

- One other thing on one slide: there was a purple line (coming off of First Street) going up to Hawthorn Plaza between Traders Row and Pequot. Well, at many meetings for Trader's Village, we asked about there being a road (in fact when the property was developed, there is a paper road between Busa and Target on the original plans) and the developers would not entertain putting a road there. They were adamant. Of course, then they immediately sold the project. That would have helped reduce the traffic on Trader's Way - which will be the only entrance residents of that huge development could use to go to Target, Market Basket, Shaws, etc. In fact they said that it would be so convenient residents could walk to the stores. When was the last time you carried your weekly shopping home - walking; and especially now, people are trying to minimize the # of trips they take to the stores. We tried, but to no avail. Not at all sure that is a viable option now that someone owns that land, and has a plan that will no longer accommodate a road there. I doubt that Pequot will be willing to have a road going up to the mall from their location and/or give up some of their parking.

- On a personal note, I bought and settled in the section of Salem I did because it was important to me to be out of the congestion, more in a country setting. But with all the development of large residential complexes, this is becoming a crowded urban area which I deliberately avoided.

- By adding more buildings in this already built up area dismisses any semblance of peace, quiet, and gentle living - if I'd wanted to live in a busy built up place, I would have. Therefore, the best option would be the Christmas light scenario - at least here the commercial look of the area would be spread out along the road, rather than concentrated all in the Hawthorne Plaza area. That way, there will be more 'sense of place' rather than look like blocks and blocks of what looks like a mall to me. I realize high rise buildings of all types have a smaller foot print, but they certainly don't provide any " Enhanced sense of place, greater visual and experiential quality.
- Well-cared for, upkeep, sense of ownership." As noted from the last meeting postits - there is interest in low height buildings, smaller shops/no more big box stores. The key words that came out of that meeting: green, calmer, cleaner, un-congested. The idea of a community garden like Mack Park was mentioned but didn't seem to get much air play. That has multiple benefits - ability to grow one's own food or supply food, green, walkable, etc. Downside - no tax revenue. But it's unclear how much tax revenue is being generated from all these large residential development projects either.
- One thing that the city seems short of is business that provide some tax revenue to the city. Several of the bigger employers have left the area, which puts more and more burden on homeowners property taxes. It would be good if development could include additional sources of revenue for the city, as well as offering employment opportunities. Due to the congestion on Highland Ave, I'm not sure if having employers along Highland Ave is a good idea, because bus lines along that route may be so slow that are not a viable transportation issue. When I worked in the city, I mostly took the blue line to work, BUT when the Lynn Ferry opened up, I took it everyday since it was 30 minutes faster than the Salem Ferry. It was a joy - I got lots done while on the ferry and made a bunch of friends. None of that was possible on the subway. But both were way better than driving all the way in.
- As is obvious, with or without this specific survey, there is a need for a 'nice' restaurant where locals can get a glass of wine and a decent meal (does not need to be high end though Olive Garden may NOT be the answer - not a chain, please!). That came up in a survey Lisa Peterson did when I first moved here - and it continues to something lacking in this area. And NO, IHOP is not the answer either!
- One last observation - early on in the presentation there was a mixed use development in Medford. That is way too over the top - too many residences, along with what appears to be an attached 'mall' (20 restaurants and retailers). It is completely unappealing visually, but the concept of cramming in so many residences and shops together is not my idea of 'sense of place'. One other observation - when I lived in Watertown and took the MassPike bus into the city to work, they built a mixed use building across from the bus stop (it was a busy bus stop). The first floor was retail space - and I must admit, there was rarely much foot traffic to those retail spots, and they changed hands constantly. Neither the residents of those apartments nor the bus riders seemed to provide sufficient 'traffic' to these shops. While the concept may be appealing, in practice I'm not sure how well it actually plays out. Salem is a historic city, and trying to build up the outskirts to look like urban sprawl just doesn't seem to fit the culture and feel for our city. While some of us choose to live outside of downtown, we still hope the historic design and culture of the city is not lost a few miles out. I chose to live in Salem, not in Medford.
- I recently moved to Clark Street, and while I enjoy my street and neighborhood community, I miss the walkability of my downtown apartment - I was able to walk to downtown restaurants, shopping, banks and the post office, as well as to the Willows to enjoy nature and relax.

- I support improvements for the sidewalks and connecting to trails to give this area the walkable, enjoyable feeling of the downtown neighborhood. The addition of a bike lane when connecting to trails would increase safety for cyclists and drivers. Including small restaurants, coffee, or locally owned stores (not just chains) on Highland Ave will increase the feeling of community to this area of the city and add customer loyalty to those stores and restaurants.

- Removing the metal center median and replacing it with trees or shrubbery would help Highland Ave feel like less of a highway, and make it feel more welcoming when crossing the street to get to trails, the bus stop, or stores. Additionally, increased left turn access may reduce the number of illegal u-turns or cars changing directions in residential streets.

- Finally, to increase safety for both drivers and pedestrians, I hope the street and existing sidewalks will be repaved, as the swerving to avoid potholes is dangerous for everyone.

- As I have stated before, the success of change and innovation of Highland Ave. is dependent on the physical repair & maintenance of the road itself, Rt. 107, by the Mass DoT. Highland Ave and its sidewalks are a mess for pedestrians, especially those with ambulation issues. There's a man who travels by electric wheelchair that I consistently see on the road in a traffic way traveling north and south—he is in danger of being hit by a car but there aren't consistent sidewalks for him to be on. I don't believe the sidewalk in front of Pep Boys is even wide enough for his wheel chair. The newly installed curb cuts are really nice but they don't always connect with an existing sidewalk in good condition. In front of the Vet Clinic, the curb cuts don't connect to a sidewalk at all, just a dirt path.

- The thing I liked best was the transformation from a 4 lane highway which encourages speeding to a more pedestrian friendly, turning off and on friendly, city street where the aesthetics and markings would hopefully slow people down.

- As a resident within 300 yards of Highland Ave, I just can't support any more residential development such as additional high-rise apartment buildings. Without efforts to ameliorate the current dense traffic, those developments will put additional stress on the area and its residents. I know the city doesn't control the properties in some locations but continued development produces more traffic, taxes the outdated water/sewer lines on Highland and creates unsafe conditions for pedestrians, cyclists, the handicapped, etc.

- The other factor for residents in the area is the impact of blasting of the ledge on the structure of homes. I have replaced my front screen door twice and the interior door once because they both stopped closing completely during the Strongwater blasting on Marlborough Road. I have no evidence to support this other than the vibration that one feels when the blasting occurs. Blasting through the ledge has to have a cumulative effect on the structure of our homes.

- I also don't support the continued erosion of the wetlands boundaries that comes up for discussion with any development proposed in Salem. It seems that we chip away at these precious ecological areas each time development is on the table. Without preservation of these wetlands and wooded areas, our interactions with coyotes, rabbits, deer, turkeys, skunks, raccoons, even rats increases and the animals usually always lose that battle. I'd like to see more effort to preserve that complex tapestry of natural elements.

- To close my comments, I believe the "Framework Goals" of increased walkability/bike-ability, calmer, greener, more housing and enhanced sense of neighborhood are critical to any development of Highland Ave. I believe these goals are crucial to retaining homeowners in the surrounding areas near the Highland/Swampscott/Marlborough interchange. Thanks for this opportunity to comment.